

Bhakti Yoga Sagar

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



VOLUME THREE

Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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With kind regards, ॐ and prem

Sriani Niranjan

Bhakti Yoga Sagar

(Ocean of the Yoga of Devotion)

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

*Satsangs at Sri Panch Dashnam Paramahansa Alakh Bara,
Rikhia, Deoghar, during the Sat Chandi Maha Yajna,
from 23rd to 30th November 1995.*

VOLUME THREE



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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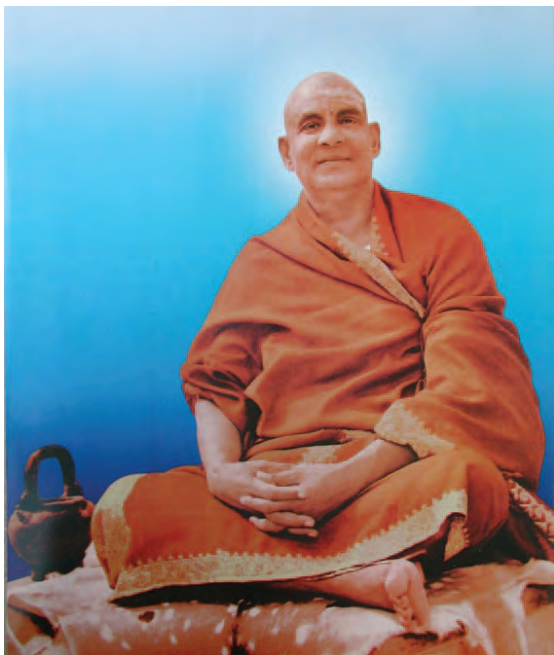
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Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.*

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Introduction

Salutations to the Mahadevi who is ever auspicious, who abides in all beings in the form of Mother, who is welfare, prosperity and success, who is at once most gentle and most terrible, who is the primordial cause and the sustaining power, who pervades this entire world in the form of consciousness.

Devi Mahatmyam

The Sat Chandi Maha Yajna was a totally new exposure for most of the yoga aspirants, devotees, disciples and even the sannyasins of Bihar School of Yoga. Until now we have been involved with the yoga practices. However, the yajna was a tantric ceremony, the meaning of which very few people know about. The yajna also represented another step in the life of an individual to understand or to communicate with the higher nature. This yajna was held in Rikhhia because Swami Satyananda wished that the hitherto unknown aspects of tantra should be slowly brought out. At present the science of tantra is misunderstood by many people who regard it as a means of magic or manipulation, rather than as an evolutionary science.

The science of tantra is based on the three aspects of mantra, yantra and mandala. When sadhana is performed utilizing these three tools, the higher mental faculties are awakened and the mind becomes powerful. The actual

aim of tantric sadhana is not to utilize these powers for personal motives or material gain, but to propitiate and harmonize the energies which at present are unharnessed and uncontrolled in the individual as well as in the external nature and in the cosmos. Throughout the ten days of the yajna, different mantras were chanted for the propitiation of Devi or Chandi by a specially selected group of Brahmin pandits who had come from such distant places as Madras, Varanasi and Kanchipuram, and whose pronunciation, swara and metre were a special experience to hear.

Just as the *Bhagavad Gita* has 700 slokas in which the wisdom of yoga is transmitted by Sri Krishna to his cousin and disciple Arjuna, similarly, *Durga Saptashati*, the text which was chanted during each day of the yajna, contains 700 slokas about the Cosmic Mother. *Durga Saptashati* is a very important tantric text which is traditionally chanted twice every year during the period of Navaratri, the nine days dedicated to the worship of the Cosmic Mother. It is a dialogue between Sage Markandeya, one of the greatest thinkers of the ancient spiritual tradition, and the warrior King Surat. Markandeya tells Surat about the different aspects of the Mother Goddess, her powers, omnipresence and creation. The *beeja*, or seed, mantras contained within these slokas awaken the energies within the individual as well as the environment. The chanting of each verse is chorused by a combination of three beeja mantras: *Aim Hreem Kleem*. *Aim* is the beeja mantra of Saraswati, *Hreem* of Lakshmi, and *Kleem* of Durga or Kali.

Mandalas and yantras were made on the tables inside the yajna *mandap*, and on top of each mandala and yantra was placed a symbolic image of the deity to be invoked. Deities were invoked in each pillar, corner, mandala and yantra. The pots on each side of the gate inside the yajna mandap were the ten *kshetrapals*, or protectors, and inside them was water brought from various rivers. The water that was used inside the mandap was brought from Gangotri, the origin of the Ganga, high in the Himalayas. On the last day of the yajna,

after the havan, all these deities were asked to leave, because when you invoke a higher power, you also have to release it. This was the concept of bringing down the cosmic forces to be with us, and then releasing them after the work was over.

The success of a yajna such as this is not measured by the expenditure incurred or the number of people who came to participate in it. The success depends on each individual, on how much each one has offered of body, mind and spirit. Industrialists can spend millions organizing a beautiful yajna, but if the feeling of devotion is not present, the yajna will not be effective. The special aspect of this yajna was the *shraddha*, the faith, and *bhakti*, the devotion, of the devotees from all castes, creeds and religions who gathered in Rikhia from all parts of the world. Although they could not understand any of the rituals and chanting, they sat with eyes closed from morning until evening and tuned into the divine vibrations present in the environment.

The yajna was a unique and special event in many ways, the main one being that a siddha saint was present as a guiding force during every moment. The teaching that he gave to all the participants through his personal example was to see the divinity in everyone and everything around you. Do not think of God as something far away. Do not be afraid of God, rather, try to understand the divine nature, the divine force which is inherent in each and everyone. The absence of that force is death. God is present in each and every aspect of creation. God is not formless. Maybe one of the attributes of God is formlessness, but definitely God has form. Each individual is a symbol of that form. The recognition of that divine nature in each and everyone is the sadhana which was given by Sri Swamiji during the yajna. It is not only a recognition, but also a feeling of oneness with other beings, identifying with their suffering and also with their happiness. Let everyone take a sankalpa to preserve this gift from Paramahamsaji for times to come.

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Tantric Worship

The word *pooja* means 'worship'. In the texts it is described as a systematic ritual. There is a method, a specified procedure in *pooja*. The worship being done here of Goddess Chandi is the tantric method of *pooja*. In this ritual everything is very precisely specified. Prayers, lamps, incense, flowers, everything down to the minutest detail has an order. This sequence of rituals is prescribed differently by various sects. For example, classical texts have their own way; Shaivites and Vaishnavites have another way. Currently only three sects exist. Previously there were five: Vaishnava, Shaiva, Shakta, Saurya and Ganapatya, out of which two, Saurya and Ganapatya, have become obsolete.

Ordinarily, how is Lord Shiva worshipped? The devotee walks into the temple, lights the lamp, offers flowers, puts marks on the forehead, bows down, rings the bell and walks out. If he knows how to blow a conch, he can blow that as well. The manner of worship is casual and, moreover, if the ritual is done without devotion, it means nothing at all. The tantric method of worship is not like this. The benefits obtained by tantric devotion are not achieved by partaking of meat, fish, sex and wine. That is a branch of tantra known as the left-hand path. I am not talking about that. Tantra means a method of *pooja*, a technique of worship, by which you can awaken the divine forces.

Method of worship

This method involves mantras and kriyas. Here the pronunciation of the mantras should be exact. This is mentioned in the Vedas and you will also see for yourselves during the nine days of chanting that a little difference in resonance changes the pulse. If you understand physics, you will acknowledge that this indeed does happen. Likewise, a small mispronunciation can bring destruction instead of protection. So one must learn the science of mantra before attempting tantric worship. Everybody is free to choose a form and method of worship. In Shakta Tantra there are the ten *mahavidyas*; Shaivites and Vaishnavites have their own forms. Each has different specifications about what colour flowers will be used, whether tulsi leaves or bel leaves are required and so on.

Different methods of worship have their own requirements, such as flowers, sandalwood paste, grains of rice, ashes, red paste and so on. The Tantra Shastras explain that very specific flowers and leaves are required for these rituals. This tradition is very well-maintained in South India, and these rituals are done with great precision there. In North India these rituals are not so well-preserved, because the region came under greater influence from foreign cultures due to which all the rituals were gradually corrupted over a period of time. However, this tradition was not broken in South India, even during the periods of Muslim and British rule. Today we find that temple worship in southern parts of India, as well as Maharashtra, is still performed according to the rules and regulations, but none of the temples in the North perform pooja with accuracy and precision. Even the basic requirement of correct pronunciation and intonation of mantras, whereby the mantra becomes efficacious, is not fulfilled.

The method of worship by means of pooja is unique to tantric and vedic culture. It does not exist in any other religion. You can find detailed literature on it in the Tantras and Vedas. Pooja is done to focus the mind for the attainment of samadhi. The meaning of *samadhi* is to stop

the mind and enter the void. This state is not possible for all to achieve directly. So, as a rule, daily worship of whatever deity one chooses should be performed. This worship can be done in many ways. There are specific poojas for Shakti, Kali, Durga, Vishnu, Shiva, even pooja for the cosmos, for creation, is described and there are definite procedures for each one. This pooja can be of half an hour's duration, or as a special ritual it can go on for a few hours or even the whole day. In the shastras there is a complete and detailed description of which mantra is to be chanted, where a specific procedure is to be undertaken, which kriyas that ritual involves, and which method of pranayama is performed with specific mantras.

Result of worship

What is the result of all this? When you do pooja daily for an hour and a half with awareness and devotion, then your mind begins to settle down. If you are chanting Hanuman Chalisa and thinking of something else at the same time, then what is the point? Only chanting Hanuman Chalisa will not necessarily settle the mind. However, if you chant mantras, do kriyas, practise pranayamas and perform a variety of other activities, then your mind cannot dissipate beyond fifty percent. Controlling fifty percent of the mental dissipation is a great achievement, because it is very difficult to stop the mind.

What are you attempting in sadhana? You are trying to control the mind. One who has attained total control of the mind becomes a saint. Mind is a power that has to be controlled and channelled. Control means purification, getting rid of distractions and illusions. It is only this veil of illusion which lies between God and man. When you control the mind by kriyas and other practices, that brings you face to face with God. Although God is sitting right here, He is not seen because of the veil. The method for removing that veil is not far away. You do not need to travel to *Satya loka*, *Brahma loka* or any other astral plane. You do not even need to travel to the Deoghar temple.

Path of worship

For the removal of that veil, you are told to do a little sadhana or pooja. Only a little at a time is prescribed, because once you get even a glimpse of God, and glimpses do appear, then your life will be filled with bliss and bliss alone. Every person has his *ishta devata*, or chosen deity. That ishta devata is something which you have to decide for yourself. You have to choose a form of the deity as your ishta devata. The ishta devata has a specific mantra which is called the ishta mantra. That ishta mantra must be obtained from the guru. Once you obtain this mantra from the guru, then it becomes your guru mantra. You have to build the whole structure on these two pillars of ishta devata and guru mantra.

Now how should you do this sadhana? It so happened that once the goddess Parvati asked Shiva how sadhana should be done and which sadhana is specific to each devata. Lord Shiva said, "Listen, O Parvati, in this world there are many paths by which you may reach a destination." For example, if you want to go from Deoghar to Munger, there are many paths. Of those, you are led onto one path. When you start this journey questions do arise, but you will find the path for sure sooner or later. So first of all you have to choose a path. Once your path is clear you then have to attempt to know what its significant landmarks are. If you want to know the way from Deoghar to Munger, you must ask what the different stations and signposts are that fall on the way. What I mean to say is that without making an enquiry, without making an attempt, nobody can find the way.

Therefore, the path has to be discovered. It is not as simple as just thinking about it and then hitting on it. Self-discovery has never happened like that. The rishis and sages knew that each individual has different interests, capabilities and limitations. According to the limitations of each person and the oddly unique circumstances which surround him, the paths twist, turn and straighten. A river also passes through many obstructions, twists and turns, but whichever path it

travels by, ultimately, it reaches the ocean. After reaching the ocean, only a feeling or perception of the journey remains.

Rules and restrictions

There are certain rules for Devi pooja but not for Shiva. This is natural. Even in ordinary life there is *maryada*, or a code of conduct, with the mother, not with the father. You can worship Shiva in any way. You can even do his pooja with dirty hands, but sometimes with your mother you have to follow rules. No rules work with the father, but there is a code with the mother, even for her own son. This is the first point. The second point is that anything which bears fruit quickly requires greater restrictions and stricter rules. When you go to the bank, there are restrictions. You get a signature here, you put a signature there, you are given a token and then you receive your money. The process of worship is similar. All worship is coded under the title of tantra. In tantra, the aspects of *mantra*, *kriya* and *upachara* have to be accurate, because these processes influence the mind, emotions and psyche. Therefore, if you are careless in performing them, they will influence your psyche negatively.

Tribal worship

Devi belongs to Shakta Tantra. In Shakta Tantra the worship of Devi is performed according to various designs, purely vedic as well as purely tribal. There are many tribes in India and in other parts of the world which have their own forms of worship. They may not worship Devi strictly according to the rituals of the Tantras or Vedas, but they still perform ritual worship. Rikhia is the tribal area of the Santhalis and they have their own forms of worship. Even in Europe and America there are still many tribes with their own systems and methods of worship, like the indigenous people in Bolivia, Colombia and other Latin American countries. In North America the indigenous tribal people are called Red Indians. Their method of worship is called Animism; they worship the forest, the tree gods, the mountain gods and the river gods.

In India, the people do the same thing. We worship the river goddesses – Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati; the tree gods – Peepal and Bel; the mountain gods – Himalaya and Vindhya. There are also different animal gods, and you will find them anywhere in the world. These are called tribal rituals, the tribal upachara, the tribal process. In this tribal process, they have their own *mantra uchcharana*, or form of incantation, and their own method, or *kriya*, which defines how they do it. For example, they do *havan* and *arati*. I have seen the type of worship done by the Native American people. I stayed with a family there and they explained how they worship. They believe there is an invisible power in nature. Although you cannot see or hear that force, it can see and hear you. However, that power can only hear you if you make the correct sound. Similarly, if you say *Aum Namah Shivayah*, Shiva will listen to you. So, by repeating certain mantras you can pass on your message to that deity or devata. You will find this tradition still exists everywhere, but that invisible and mysterious divinity always remains secret.

Shakti worship

Therefore, in tantric worship, you should remember that you are dealing with a power which is mysterious, which is hidden, about which you know nothing. Shakti has three forms: i) the benign, ii) the destructive and iii) the creative. I am using the word Shakti, but you can also say Devi, Goddess, Madre and so on. If you awaken her aspect of destruction, you know what is going to happen. If you play with your mother as you play with your wife, that is a negative approach. Similarly, there is a negative approach in Shakti worship and if you take that approach the Mother will give you back a kick, and that kick can be anything. If an elephant kicks you, you will be thrown fifty metres. If Shakti gives you a kick, you will be cursed – *Namo Narayana!*

So, worship of Shakti has to be done only to awaken her benign powers. You must love and respect your mother. You can play with her, but not as you play with your wife. There

should be no abuse of the relationship. That is why the rules are very similar in mantra, kriya and upachara. The worship of Devi gives quick rewards. Just as you have fast food, similarly there are fast blessings, then and there. I am not telling you this from books, but from my experience. Worship of the Mother gives quick results, so rules and regulations must be observed. The rules are specified also because there is a certain grace and dignity in worship of the Mother goddess. One has to have respect for that. Although there are many methods of worshipping Devi or Shakti, worship performed with faith and devotion is best.

You cannot afford to misbehave with the Mother, therefore, there are rules regarding all aspects of diet, mantra, kriya and procedures of worship. Such methods and procedures are necessary for any action, not just for worship. When you build a house, you must first construct the foundations and the pillars, then the roof. There are specific methods for shaving the head or for wearing clothes. If you want to learn music, cooking or political science, there is a process, a system. There are systematic rules and methods in everything. So why should there not be a process of worship? When the correct procedure is followed, there is no confusion; everything follows a specific order. Vedic rituals may allow some leniency, but this is not the case in tantric worship of Devi.

Creator is Mother

The three main branches of tantra are: Shaiva Tantra, Shakta Tantra and Vaishnava Tantra. Of these, Shaiva Tantra is a more philosophical one. There are several sects of Shaivism, such as Kashmir Shaivism and Southern Shaivism. For instance, *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* is the philosophy of *Traitvad*: *ishwara*, *jiva* and *jagat*; God, individual soul and creation. So it is called a trinity, or *Traitvad*. *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* is one of the important texts of Shaivism. It forms part of *Rudrayamala Tantra*. However, in Shakta Tantra there are many systems for the worship of Shakti, the primal energy,

from which the creator as well as creation has come. If you read the book *Devi Bhagavatam* carefully, that is the primary hypothesis. Adi Shakti is the first Mother; the first energy.

The creator must have been born from someone. The creator is not the original creator; he has also been created. Who can the original creator be but the mother? The father does not create; it is the mother who creates. Therefore, in Shakta Tantra the Mother is considered to be the first creator, although the Christians, Muslims, Zoroastrians and Jews do not accept it. Many Hindus also do not accept it, but we accept it. The first creator is the Mother, and that concept is still found in most of the tribal traditions. Among the indigenous tribes of North and South America, everywhere there is worship of the Mother. All tribal communities have a female deity. They worship some form of Mother according to their own culture. Hindus follow the vedic culture, but that too bifurcates into *Vedachara* and *Lokachara*.

The Sat Chandi Yajna is the worship of God as the Mother or the Mother Goddess. Most of us think of God as the Father. In a patriarchal society, God has to be like a father; however, in a matriarchal society, God has to be like a mother. Now the entire world is moving towards a matriarchal system. Everywhere women have more freedom, authority and respect. There is better education, more opportunities and improved status for women. As we move towards a matriarchal society, it is appropriate to worship the Mother Goddess, so that she doesn't become angry with us. If she says, "You fellows have tortured me for such a long time," I'll say, "No, I have been worshipping you for such a long time. I called you here for Sat Chandi Yajna."

Instructions for the Yajna

The yajna begins the day after tomorrow. All the participants should shave and prepare themselves for this event. Tomorrow everyone will receive a tilak on the forehead. It is your fortune to have been called here. Those people who have come to do the cleaning and kitchen work have been specifically called by me for this purpose and should remain in perfect health. The cleaning work is reserved for sannyasins. Those people who have come to participate should follow all the disciplines and austerities, and study the pooja performance very closely.

Everybody cannot participate in the rituals because this is a tantric pooja and, therefore, only specific people can take part in it. Even I will not enter. The rules have already been made and we will conduct ourselves accordingly. The pooja of Devi is different to the pooja of Shiva. Shiva has an open court, but Devi has her own grace, personality and way of working. There are rules, disciplines and observances, and when you follow them you will agree that the pooja of Devi is very powerful. Therefore, the rules have to be maintained accordingly.

The pooja will be conducted according to all the rites and rituals described in the tantric texts. It is not necessary to participate in these, but it is important to hear the chanting, walk around the ceremonial mandap and follow all the other rules. The most important thing underlying all these rituals

is intense divine love. When you have that feeling within you, only then can you sit patiently, listen to the chanting and take *prasad*. The yajna will last for nine days and during this period you should have only fruit for lunch and a normal dinner when you return home.

To the sannyasins

With this tilak you have now all become official participants in the Sri Yajna. You should eat the same food as the pandits – *phalahara*, fruit, at noon and solid food only at night. There should be no eating during the day. For nine days you will follow the schedule of the pandits, and sing kirtan every night for half an hour. You will have no personal life. Day and night the yajna is most important. There is no fixed time for sleeping and waking. You may have to work the whole night, it doesn't matter. Now you are an integral part of the yajna, not of your own life.

There should be no sickness or exhaustion during this period. If you are sick and exhausted, leave this place and don't even bother to inform us. There is no place for sick and exhausted people in my life, because I have never been sick. During the yajna there should be no personal programs, no reading of newspapers or books for nine days and nights. I am joining day with night and making it one, so there is no difference between day and night.

There have been many great men in this world and almost all of them were afflicted with some disease or physical problem. Napoleon was epileptic, despite which he became one of the world's greatest military generals. Julius Caesar suffered from epilepsy. Isaac Newton was sick throughout his life. Adi Shankara suffered from severe fistula. Ramakrishna Paramahansa had cancer but still he lived for eighty years. Swami Vivekananda had diabetes, but he still shook the whole world and established his name in the annals of great men. He has become immortal in India. Many sadhus in India crave name and fame, but Vivekananda didn't know that his name would go down

in history. He often had attacks of depression. If you look at his life and teachings from a spiritual viewpoint, then he was an incarnation of God, but if you see him from a scientific viewpoint, then you will think that he just went into emotional fits and bouts of depression.

When you consider yourself to be sick then you are sick. But if you do not consider yourself to be sick and think of yourself as an artist, a musician, a scientist, a fighter, a saint, a sevak, then the question of disease does not arise. This is why I have never considered myself to be sick. I have mentioned a few great people who have established their names in this world, people whom history will remember for at least a thousand years. They suffered from severe diseases but did not allow the disease to become a barrier in their lives. Ramakrishna could have said, “I have cancer,” and stopped singing kirtans and bhajans, but he did not do so! Vivekananda could have said, “I have diabetes so now I must rest and take insulin,” but he did not. When you identify with a sickness or disease then you suffer from disease neurosis twenty-four hours of the day. Disease neurosis means your mind is engrossed in sickness, so you are sick. But when your mind is engrossed in spiritual life, or in a life of accomplishment and activity, then the disease only follows behind like a tail. How does that matter? You can let the disease follow behind you like a tail. Just as a dog has a tail, your tail is called diabetes.

Maintain the proper spirit

You are all gathered here to participate in the Sat Chandi Maha Yajna. I have told everyone not to eat during the day for this period. If you have hyperacidity, drink some milk. During these nine days fasting is very necessary, as well as continuous repetition of Devi’s name as japa. We can think about what the Muslims do in Mecca as an example for ourselves. During Haj, Muslims from all over the world gather in Mecca. There are many Muslim sects and communities which belong to different countries and speak different languages. When they reach Jeddah airport, they

are given a locker in which to keep all their belongings. They take off all their clothes and wear only a single unstitched cloth, or *dhoti*, around the waist and an upper cloth which is also unstitched. The women also take off their veils. This is the order of things there.

They then take a small mala, like a *sumarini*, and repeat only one mantra during their pilgrimage of Haj, *Allah-o-Akbar*, which means 'God is great'. While there they continue to repeat this mantra in the same way that we do *japa*. They are all lodged in tents, and everyone from an ordinary man right through to the king lives in the same manner. An automobile mechanic and the Shah of Jordan stay in the same place under a tent, because in Mecca there are no large hotels. Hotels were constructed only nine or ten years ago, before that there were none. There is no provision for radio, TV or newspapers. No radio plays while the *pooja* is going on, unlike here, as it is totally banned there. During the period of Haj, radios and cameras are not allowed into Mecca, but are held at Jeddah airport. Even passports are held there and pilgrims are issued with an identity card.

Lighten the load

This is just an example of the prevailing spirit amongst the Muslims who go for Haj. Christians don't have such a strict tradition. They have relaxed the rigidity of tradition a bit recently and we Hindus have been doing this for a long time. We don't even care whether a *bhajan* or a movie song is being played outside while we conduct rituals of worship.

During the next few days all those who have come to attend the *Devi pooja* should at least discontinue their regular habit of eating heavy food. A fruit diet with a little milk is much better than a cereal based diet. Those items which are cooked in heavy amounts of ghee should be stopped. You should fast for the entire day, there is no harm in that. In the evening, after the *pooja*, don't have a heavy meal but take *sattwic* food. Saying that you are a vegetarian is not enough, because vegetarian food can also be *rajasic*. The *sattwic* type

of vegetarian food has no fat and spices, so it will be best if you limit fat, protein and spices during these nine days.

How will doing this help? If you do this during the yajna your vehicle will be relieved of the extra load. In order to find a remedy for your physical problems, you need to find a remedy for your soul, spirit, *antah karana* and mind. The gross body you can all see, but within this body is also the mind which thinks, and you do not have control over that mind. You cannot control the thoughts which cross your mind twenty-four hours a day. The thought process continues incessantly; thoughts arise automatically, even if you do not wish them to come. When you lighten the physical load, the mental load is also lightened and the thoughts become more sattwic and controlled. This is what you should experience during the nine days of the yajna.

Divine Mother

Sat Chandi Yajna is performed according to the tantric form of worship. In the various *sampradaya*, there are different forms of yajna, such as Vishnu Yajna and Gayatri Yajna. In this age the most powerful yajna is Sat Chandi Yajna. It is said that the feminine divine power is the ultimate power, the mother power. It is not the father but the mother who comes first. Without the mother there can be no one. *Jagatmata*, the Divine Mother, the world Mother, is the ultimate reality. From her, all forms of god have sprung: Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh and so on. They are all created by that Mother who is birthless and beginningless, *anadi*. That is the concept of Mother in the Shakta as well as in the Vedic tradition.

Later the social traditions relegated the Mother to the background. Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and many forms of Hinduism also did the same, but the main factors responsible are not really spiritual but social. They started with God as a masculine reality, such as Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh. So then Saraswati, Lakshmi and Parvati became secondary realities, just counterparts of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, and that situation continued for a long

period of time. Due to the Greek influence as well as Christianity and Islam, the masculine concept of divinity spread all over the globe and it was widely accepted that God is supreme and nothing is beyond God. There was no thought about the human rights of a female because in most religions the feminine gender was considered to be very inferior, but this was not so in the Shakta tradition.

In the Shaiva tradition, Shiva is on the right and Shakti is on the left, but in the Shakta tradition Shakti stands with one leg on Shiva who sleeps. Moreover, Shakti is seen as the sole power in the body at mooladhara chakra. The Shakta tradition believes that Shakti is at the bottom of everything in creation, that she is the centre or nucleus of all matter. Not only is Shakti the nucleus of all matter, she is also the nucleus within you, not just of your mind or *antah karana*, but of your soul or *atma*. Shakti is seen in the form of light, electricity, dharma, beauty, anger, charm and unity. She is seen in every teaching in many forms. In *Durga Saptashati* (5th Chapter), the different forms of Shakti are described: *Shakti roopena*, *shuddha roopena*, *shanti roopena*, *tushti roopena*, *pushti roopena*; the form of energy, the form of purity, the form of peace, the form of satisfaction, the form of nourishment. She is seen in many forms, not just in the feminine form, in the form of electricity or in the form of tantra. *Sarva bhootena* means that she exists not only in human beings but in all forms of existence.

Purpose of the yajna

There are many forms of worship to awaken Shakti and one of them is Sat Chandi Yajna, which is done according to the tantric system. The *mandap*, place of fire, *chatushkaran* and *bhupura* are some of the essential ritualistic elements of tantric yajna. Now, the pandits will initiate the kriya, mantra and uchcharana, which means recitation of the mantra. Every item and its usage is specified: the flowers, lotus, rose, *jabapuspam*, *gandhapuspam*, *chandana*, *kumkum*, the type of wood and grain to be used. Although tantra is misunderstood everywhere in the world, this yajna is part of tantra.

Tantra means a technique for awakening, and this tantric yajna is being done for two purposes. Firstly, I wish to give the villagers, my neighbours, the opportunity of taking part in such a ceremony because they don't have the means to organize such a yajna in a village. In Deoghar or in Patna it is possible, but here the people have no resources. They can't invite pandits or other such people. Secondly, it is only the Divine Mother who will help them. Nobody else helps them. These poor people make the government but then the government forgets them. After the leading party has come into power, there is a lot of talk in the capital but nothing happens here, not even a hand pump arrives. I know because I live here; I am the witness. When the cow comes into heat, it has become cool by the time it reaches Deoghar. This is not a small thing; it is a big loss for a villager and it happens time and again. There is nobody to help these people except for God. They are helpless and they say that the government is doing nothing and it cannot do anything. Only the force of God can help them, and it is with this hope that I am organizing the Sat Chandi Yajna.

*Sarve bhavantu sukhinah,
Sarve santu niramaya,
Sarve bhadrani pashyantu,
Maa kashchit dukha bhagabhavet.*

May God make them prosperous,
May God make them disease free,
May God remove all the sickness and ills of their family,
And let them enjoy bliss, peace, happiness and health.

This is my sankalpa, and for this reason I am performing this yajna. Until the villagers receive the grace of the Mother Goddess, their sorrows will not be removed. They are very good people who suffer from ignorance, illiteracy, helplessness, disease and much more. I know the villagers for eight to ten kilometres around, and they do everything here for me. We have just had a transformer installed and they did

all the work on it themselves. They are very intelligent and very skilled; they clean and service all the vehicles: tractors, truck, cycles and motor cycles, even the UPS.

Propitious prosperity

These villagers have not yet gone to the cities, but if they do, the village will be finished. Therefore, we want to provide the necessary facilities for education in the village itself. Each family should have a small house where they can cook their two meals and their children can live safely. A few days ago many houses collapsed during a storm and the people had to live in relief camps. By the time aid comes, the second storm will also have passed and they will still remain homeless.

So we have developed a new technology of mud houses here. The house which I use is made totally of mud. Anybody can live in such a house. They can have a separate kitchen and living room. I live in one room, the other is my pooja room and I sleep in the corridor. If every family is given a house like this to live in, then that will be a divine blessing. I don't want these people to become so rich that they take to wine, meat, prostitution and gambling, because that kind of prosperity brings evil. If the money in the house brings inauspicious things, then we don't want it.

This is a very powerful yajna because I have chosen the pandits, I have given them strict instructions, and all the swamis are working day and night on the preparations. I have received the water from seven rivers and the soil from every country in the world for this occasion. My disciples come from every continent, so I have not had any problems in this regard. All that I want is for the water from every part of the globe to stay here, and I will pray to God that all the participants obtain happiness, at least as much as I have been given here.

Prasad

When worship begins, we offer prasad to the people. We may give a bicycle, but that is not a donation. I am strictly against donations, charity or alms. Begging for alms is the duty of a sannyasin, not that of a *grihastha*, or householder. A sannyasin has to beg, he cannot donate. A *grihastha* does not beg, he offers things in charity. I cannot make the river flow back upstream. By God's grace, Ganga is flowing in the right direction down here. I am not Ganga or God, but there must be a medium of expression for God's grace. Therefore, we offer everything – rickshaws, bicycles, tools, even cows and bulls – to God. These become offerings just like flowers or sweets, and then we distribute them as prasad. There is no stamp of donation on them; they are the Lord's prasad.

According to the scriptures, *brahmins* and *shudras* are entitled to beg for alms but *kshatriyas* and *vaishyas* are not. Brahmins were supposed to beg for alms and that is why they were respected. It is not without reason that the brahmins were considered to be the highest caste. Their lives were not like those of ordinary people, because they were always engaged in *swadhyaya*. They used to study and teach others, conduct yajna, pooja and other sacred rituals, and in turn, they would receive ample donations for their livelihood. The brahmins lived very simple lives along with their wives and

children. Other castes were impressed by their austerity and ideals and that is why the brahmins were considered to be the highest caste.

When a saint or sage does rigorous austerities he is respected, but when he craves for sensual pleasures he loses that respect. Today the brahmins have lost their special position of privilege and respect in society because they don't maintain the high ideals with which they were associated in the past. In the same way, if saints and sages leave their austerities, sadhana and renunciation, then they too will meet the same end. In these changing times, brahmins should be vessels of knowledge and the arts. They may own land, but they should still maintain positive traditions and samskaras in their families.

Bhartihari, who was a great poet king, has said that those who behave like deer, just grazing on grass, although they are born in the human body, are a burden to the earth. Music, literature and art are the marks of a human being. Without these one cannot be called human. In the same way, the individual or caste cannot be identified by its appearance, but by its behaviour and actions. What is the identity of a sadhu? Nobody becomes a sadhu by wearing geru cloth or by shaving his head. A sadhu is identified by his actions. Similarly, nobody becomes a brahmin merely by doing fire ceremonies, and nobody becomes a kshatriya by keeping arms. Their actions identify them.

Sannyasins' duty

Now, it is the duty of each and every sannyasin to fulfil their obligations to society. They have to contribute something to society, not to me. I don't need anything. I have two loin cloths, and I only wear that for your sake! I can throw it away as well. I eat once a day, only two chapatis, and anyone in this village can give me that at any time. I don't need to get it from you. But all sannyasins, particularly those who hold office, should give something to society. Householders, even after marrying off their daughters, feeding their

children and paying their taxes, have brought things for the poor. Why then should sannyasins come empty-handed? Those who come without an offering show sheer ungratefulness to the tradition.

Therefore, go to the market and purchase blankets, golden rings or *mangalasutra*. After all, if you were married and had daughters, what would you give them as a dowry? If a sadhu or a sannyasin begins to live and earn for the fulfilment of his own cravings, then a householder is much better than him. A sannyasin has to repay his debt to society. There are different kinds of debts: the debt to God, to ancestors, to guru and so forth. These debts, which are called *rin*, have been clearly enumerated in the scriptures, and you have to repay them. Otherwise there is no salvation, no *mukti*. You will simply die with your guru clothes on, that's all. This applies to all sannyasins, whether they are Indian or not.

I know who has brought offerings because I get a computerized report everyday. A sannyasin should not go to the guru empty-handed, particularly those who hold prominent positions. If you don't have anything to offer, then beg or borrow something! But don't expect anything from me in return. Most of the sannyasins think, "Swami Satyananda will help us establish our ashram, he will give us plenty of money." No, not a pie! I do not spend money on myself. My only duty is to feel oneness, *atmabhav*, with my neighbours. *Atmabhav* means to treat others like myself.

Role of Women in Modern Society

A woman is the way to Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity. When your wife comes to your home after marriage she brings wealth and assets with her. She saves your money and at times she earns as well. She brings a dowry of money, ornaments, jewellery and gold. She has an income from her job and she maintains the home economy by saving money. Therefore, women should not be limited to the kitchen alone. Of course, proper food is necessary, but these days any maid can cook for a few hundred rupees a month. If you pay one or two thousand you can get a very good cook. Supposing you earn five to six thousand rupees per month and pay two thousand to a maid, you will also be generating employment. Therefore, I tell women not to sit at home.

Need for social interaction

There are many women in the villages who maintain the home as well as work in the fields. That is self-employment but it is not taken into account in the nation's economy. It doesn't appear in the statistics because anyone can pick up the cow dung or milk the cow, but not everyone can earn five to six thousand rupees per month. Therefore, if educated women sit at home and spend all their time in the kitchen, it does not make sense. Women should remember that wherever they work, the job they do not only earns money,

it also brings them into contact with society. This social interaction is a very important aspect of growth.

Girls who stay at home remain simple like children; they do not know how to move about in society. In Bombay, women begin travelling around the city from 4 am and they continue until midnight. They travel in trains late at night without fear. The village women can be fearless too, but they are afraid because they have no experience. Our female swamis travel day and night, they are not afraid of anything. If you tell Swami Satsangi to travel at any time in the night, she can do it because the swamis have that training. However, the village women are frightened of travelling because they lack this experience, not because there is any risk involved. When village women visit someone's house, they take a young boy along as their security guard. If a hefty, strong man were to accompany them it would be understandable, but they do it for psychological reasons only, in order to avoid social interaction.

Times are not so bad; virtue still rules the world. There has been vice, accidents do occur here and there, but that will continue even though the Lord of Virtue rules this earth. The village girls can also move about. If a girl wishes she can travel to Deoghar by bicycle at night, but she will not dare. Why does this fear arise? Fear arises only when one is not aware of the real circumstances. In Bombay, girls travel day and night because they have been doing so from a young age and they know nothing will happen. If they think something will happen, then they will also feel fear. This fear is psychological, due to lack of social exposure. This society is not as bad as people imagine it to be; it is not necessary to keep women trapped within four walls. Perhaps this is not an ideal, sattwic society – it is a rajasic and tamasic one. However, the restrictions imposed upon women are inappropriate to the times.

Women should also start an enterprise or business. Their minds will then be engaged and they will remain happy. Why should they lose the opportunities which are being offered in society today? Women may sit at home, weave

a carpet, stitch clothes or make something else, sell it and earn ten to twenty thousand rupees. However, by employing themselves in this way, they do not enter into social life. By restricting their social exposure, they will not be able to control the destiny of society. Every individual decides the direction of society. It is only through social interaction that control can be exercised in relation to whether laws are made in favour of women or men, in relation to education, marriage, crime, kidnapping and rape. Only then will this become an aggressive society.

Women's rights

Whether it is a society of poor, backward classes or of rich, educated classes, it is not enough to merely be an active society. It should be an aggressive society as well. Why an aggressive society? If there is an upheaval elsewhere in India, the entire government and even the Prime Minister is shaken. However, if anything happens in Deoghar, the government is not bothered. Why? Because the people here are not aggressive. An aggressive man can fight for his rights. Only the society which is aggressive can obtain its rights. One has to seize one's rights. Rights are not given in charity, rights are seized.

Throughout the world people have fought for their rights. In all the developed countries women have fought for and seized their rights. Previously, the condition of women in the West was the same as it is here. They had the same social restrictions and now they have seized their legal, political, professional and social rights. They have even seized the right to change the marital laws. All the laws in this country today are made with men in view, because a man knows his circumstances and problems. But what about the problems of women? Nobody makes laws for them because men don't understand women's problems; only women can know their own problems.

When it comes to solving women's problems, to making laws for their benefit, to obtaining their rights, women have no social exposure or experience. They sit at home, making

incense sticks, soap and bidis, and think, “We have earned money, let us enjoy it.” But earning money is not enough. Money is also earned by theft. You can stab someone on the road and make fifty thousand rupees. Money can be earned by any means. Even sinners have wealth, even prostitutes are rich. Obtaining wealth is fine, but the most important thing is to obtain one’s rights. These rights will not be given by donation or as charity and, therefore, every woman must know how to seize her rights.

If uneducated women march in a procession to ask for their rights, they won’t get anything. To obtain one’s rights one must deserve them. Only marching for them and asking for them won’t work. One must have the qualities which deserve them, and those qualities are developed by social interaction. Social interaction means mixing with men and moving around. Only then will one come to know that there are good as well as bad people in society. In any big city, day and night, the women keep mixing and moving; they go to the office, they work. In the villages moving around and mixing is not done, so the women feel insecure. That is why they are backward, and a backward class has backward thinking. The economic and political situation is also backward because the people are afraid.

Necessity of struggle

Only the race which knows how to struggle rises in the pages of history. What is struggle? A boy makes a great effort to find a job but fails; his pocket money is finished so he works in somebody’s house; he has no place to live and walks miles for food; meanwhile he catches malaria, then a letter comes saying his mother is sick. This is struggle. The man who survives these struggles becomes victorious, his society becomes victorious. Societies can be victorious or lost. Indian society is a lost society, not a victorious one. The people here struggle because they have no choice. There must be a feeling of pleasure in the struggle, then those struggles remain as memorable events in life.

Many years ago I went to Raipur. I had no money so I could not afford to buy any dinner. I thought, "Let me go into the city and I will find someone to help me." I reached the city in the morning and as I was walking I passed a wealthy-looking man. I stopped and asked him for some alms. He said, "You are a strong man, go and work somewhere. Why are you begging?" So I said, "Okay", and walked away. My head was throbbing and I was reeling from hunger. I began to walk towards Lakshmipur. While walking along the road, I saw a priest sitting outside a hut by the roadside. I thought, "Let me go in. He looks like a saintly man and he will surely help me." He was a friendly person and gave me a mat to sit on. My head was throbbing and so painful that I didn't even feel like talking. Although the priest was a foreign missionary he could speak Hindi. He asked me, "Where are you going?" I replied, "I have no particular destination." Then he asked, "Will you have some tea or coffee?" I said, "Yes, I will," and so he brought some coffee and biscuits. Then he offered me a cigar. The moment I smoked that cigar my headache vanished. I can remember that experience even today. This is not just a story of struggle but of memorable events in life.

One must face struggles while moving about in society. If one goes out to a movie and gets a headache, this is not struggle, but an experience of ordinary life. If one sits at home and conducts one's business from there in order to avoid struggle, this is a very narrow approach to life. If educated people do this, what can be expected from the village people?

Pooja and chanting

Ladies should learn pooja and chanting of the Sanskrit stotras and perform these rituals in their homes. In Maharashtra there is a place called Shirdi and the establishment of Satya Sai Baba is nearby. A saint named Upasani Maharaj lived in the vicinity. He had a disciple whose name was Sati Godavari. Girls used to live in that ashram, even young girls, and they were taught vedic rituals and chanting of the Vedas.

Maharashtra is very orthodox and the people objected to females chanting the Vedas, although there is not a single point in favour of this opposition. Nowhere in the Smritis, Kalpa shastras or any of the religious texts has it been said that a woman cannot wear the sacred thread. In all the six philosophies, four Vedas, one hundred and eight Upanishads, eighteen Puranas and two epics, nowhere is it written that a female cannot wear the sacred thread.

The second point raised in opposition is that women should not conduct pooja and other rituals. This is also not mentioned anywhere in the scriptures, yet it is the reason why female priests are not found in the temples. This restriction is only due to the Muslim and Christian influence on our culture. In Islam and Christianity you do not find female priests. It is only recently that some provision has been made for female clergy in the Protestant church. When the Protestants allowed women to become priests, many people resigned their membership. They said it is written in the Bible that women should not conduct rituals in the church, but this is absolutely wrong.

Karmakanda refers to the precise rituals for the chanting of mantras and the conduct of pooja. There is a correct method for doing pooja, just as there is a correct method for constructing a house, cooking a dish or stitching cloth and making a shirt. Everything we do in the world has a definite process and method. In the same way there is a definite process for pooja and that is called *vidhi*. Women are certainly qualified to learn the chanting of mantras and the correct method of performing pooja. When women perform these rituals in the home as well as in the temples and sacred places, then society will benefit and the social atmosphere will improve.

Female education

Since I have been here in Rikhia the percentage of girls registering in the schools has increased. I have not asked them to go to school, but they see the female sannyasins

driving cars, trucks and tractors, supervising construction work and going to the market full of confidence and courage. So they have imbibed this desire to learn and to become something. I have only one principle: As long as the machine is functioning at an optimal level, the product will be of a high quality. These young girls are the manufacturing machines of the future. Males are only the operators. After all, we are all born from the womb of a female, they are the manufacturing machines. So, whether the product is good or bad depends on them. Therefore, we must educate, encourage and inspire girls to create an aggressive community, not a passive one.

Obligation to women

Kumari Poojan will be performed here at the end of the Chandi Yajna and I have included worship of the daughter-in-law. We have selected the girls for this pooja from Rikhia itself. We try to help and promote the women, and I am already famous or infamous for that. However, I don't mind what people say, because if saints and sages do not fulfil their duty towards women, then who will? Most people are afraid to be outspoken, but what have I to fear? Don't we have a duty and an obligation towards the woman whose womb we have occupied for nine months? Yet we call a man whom we haven't even known 'father' and feel that we owe everything to him! We have been closest to a woman because we have lived in her womb for nine months. We emerged into this world out of her body, so why should we feel different from her? Why should we try to separate ourselves from her?

I don't care what people say, it is my right to respect women, to love women, to protect women and to give them everything that I have to give. I will give whatever I can to women. I can give love, respect and equality, and these things must be given to women. This is our dharma, duty and obligation because we are their children. A woman's nature is always that of a mother. Whether a woman is your wife or daughter, her nature is that of a mother, and

the mother too was a woman once. My mother was also a woman and I am very thankful to her for producing me. The qualities which I have imbibed are not due to my father. The credit for creating my life goes to my mother, not to my father, because he was only a medium.

Only kisses, not education

The strange thing is that all the legal and social rights belong to the man, not to the woman. When the wife dies, the husband becomes a widower, but he does not change his clothes, he does not wear white, he does not stop participating in religious activities. Yet when the wife becomes a widow, she must wear white clothes and remove all her jewellery. She becomes an outcast, is considered to be inauspicious and cannot participate in religious activities. Such traditions are wrong but people are unable to remove them because their mothers only gave them life and helped them to grow; they did not educate their minds. Mothers have given only kisses to their children, not education.

A child learns up to the age of seven years and that knowledge is known as *samskara*. The child stops receiving this knowledge after seven years so the education of a child ends at that age. Thus the mother is the most important factor in the child's early life. After the age of seven, the child begins his academic education in the school with the teacher; this is intellectual or worldly education. The inner, spiritual education which is received in the form of *samskara* is completed by the seventh year. Theology and psychology both accept this view. It is the ultimate conclusion of modern psychology and it is also the conclusion of the Dharma shastras, the religious scriptures and the Vedas. Therefore, mothers should teach their children properly until the seventh year.

In tune with the times

Women should learn to think differently. To begin with, a woman should stop thinking like a servant. She is the

master of the house and she must think like that. Times are changing very rapidly and she must think accordingly. Today girls wear jeans, before that they wore mini skirts and before that full Victorian dress. In my village, the uneducated Santhali girls who work as labourers told Swami Satsangi, “We want to wear jeans because we have difficulty working in petticoats and saris.” So we gave them all jeans and now the girls who come to work as labourers wear jeans and caps.

We have worshipped beauty from antiquity, but the definition of beauty in modern culture is different from that of ancient times. In the past long hair was the definition of beauty; today short hair is considered beautiful. In the past a heavy build was considered to be beautiful; today a slim body is more attractive. In the past people wore ornaments on many parts of the body, but today they wear only a few selected ornaments, matching the overall apparel. There are many books on the science of beauty. Rishi Vatsayan wrote the *Kama Sutra*, which contains a chapter on how to use herbs, oils, perfumes and diet in order to become more beautiful.

The definition of beauty in the West is entirely different to that of India. Here beauty is a balanced combination of body contours, clothes and ornaments, whereas in western culture, the clothing should be attractive, whether or not the body is beautifully proportioned. Ornaments are not used to attract attention, nor is hair considered to be an important attraction; only the quality of the clothes and the body are significant.

Desegregation

In the past, men and women were segregated as if they were petrol and fire, but today this situation has changed. Boys and girls can live together but not marry until they have developed physical feelings for each other. They remain together with pure, clean thoughts. This is possible because the relationship between a man and a woman is not that of petrol and fire. Physical interaction between boys and

girls will not take place until they develop the thoughts of a man and a woman, of physical union. Until then there is no harm if they live together. Just as a man lives with his sister, mother or daughter, he can live with other women also with the same purity of thought. When physical thoughts come, then he may say, "Okay, let's go to a temple or a church and get married." Then the couple will be registered as man and wife and have social status.

It is because of segregation that women in our society have not been able to uplift themselves. The mistake is ours as well as theirs. Women cannot break out of the mould, the limitations which have been imposed on them by society. Restrictions were imposed on women in past ages due to certain circumstances that were prevalent at that time. Of course, there were reasons why women had to be protected, but today the life and conditions are not what they were then.

Adaptable culture

India can change because this is the inherent nature of Indian culture. To adjust, change and adapt is the nature of the vedic culture. The national environment can change; the Indian constitution is flexible. If we think that the culture of the West is very convenient, progressive and enlightened, we can accept it. Similarly, if Europeans feel that this vedic system, the philosophy of India, is the best one for their spiritual lives, we can accept them also. Our religious and social constitution must be flexible, and India is very amenable to this. In many countries, women are not allowed out of their homes not permitted to drive cars or have normal interactions with outsiders. But in India women are encouraged to be outgoing because they are intelligent.

In India, the people have respect for western culture and there are many aspects which they accept, such as dress, social interaction and education. However, it will take time to implement these aspects. Indian culture has the quality of adaptability, which enables society to change according

to the times and circumstances. It is also said that religion is not weakened by these social changes. If your daughter or sister decides to cut her hair, she has not become impure or gone against any vedic tradition or thought. If she wears jeans and a T-shirt, goes out and talks to this or that person, she has not disobeyed any religious law. Religion is weakened by human conduct, not by what one wears. The basis of all religions is conduct: *Acharah prathamah dharmah*, “Conduct is the first dharma”.

Any action which does not hurt or destroy dharma can be performed and there is no harm in such actions. Society must be progressive; only then can it get ahead in this competitive age. If half of the population remains ignorant, weak, fearful and insecure in this age of competition, society cannot go forward or compete with the rest of the world. People won’t be able to obtain the basic amenities for their households, they won’t be able to earn an income and nowadays everything is expensive.

Upanayan Samskara

The thread ceremony is named *upanayan samskara*. During that rite the thread which the child puts on is called *yajnopavita*, which means *yajna* plus *upavita*, ‘initiated into education’. In the olden days, our culture regarded education as a *yajna*. It was called *yajna shreshtha karma*, meaning that education is the most superior action. Today education is considered to be the most superior action as well. So at the age of seven years, the *samskara* of *upanayan* was performed. These days it might be called a ritual, but then it used to be a scientific tradition done for purely scientific reasons.

Modern psychologists are also consistent on one point: that real education, which is at the level of *samskara*, is completed at the age of seven years. This is a universally accepted fact, and on this basis it is said that the mother always remains a part of the child’s psyche. Until the age of seven the father and child did not stay together constantly. Therefore, the mother and not the father was given the status of the first guru, *mata prathamam guruh*. Today, unfortunately, mothers who qualify for the status of guru do not exist, but they are being made now. Day and night we say, “Educate the girls more than the boys.” We are pressing this point in order to give more importance, more rights and more freedom to girls than to boys.

In the past, we were doing it all wrong. I am saying this not because I am a social reformer, but because we are poor people. Labourers working in big cities can easily earn fifteen hundred rupees a year but local labourers can hardly earn four hundred. The labourer who works here can't even afford to go to Bhagalpur to visit his guru. How much poverty prevails here! The cause of poverty is the deficiency of Lakshmi, and women are Lakshmi, not men. In the first mantra of *Saundarya Lahari* it is written: *Shivah shaktya yukto yadi bhavati shaktah prabhavitum*, 'Without Shakti, even Shiva is ineffective'.

The manifest form of Shakti is the female, the girl, the sister, the daughter, the wife, the mother, and we males have made her a cripple. We have cut her wings because during the middle ages another influence was thrust upon us. We had to adjust ourselves to that political influence then, but now the times have changed. We are living in a modern civilization where our daughters can do an MA or an LLB, stand up in the Supreme Court and argue a case, or run for election and sit in Parliament. In today's society girls can talk freely with boys. Nobody infers that there must be something cooking between them. That society has gone, and such a society should go, otherwise your society cannot advance.

Until the age of seven years, the mother is the guru of the child. She is responsible for the development of all the desired qualities, such as love, compassion and intelligence. Just as the gardener looks after a small plant, she too provides for the total care and nutrition of the child. The compost and manure are derived from her blood and bone marrow. She is like the farmer who gives urea to the plant when it is growing. Once the plant is fully grown, urea is no longer useful. In the same way, giving nutrition to a baby is the mother's responsibility, and that nutrition does not mean only feeding, it is all inclusive. How to manage and take care of the child's eyes, for example. If the eyes develop a squint after birth then the mother can correct it, because the body is amenable to change at that time.

So, the education which a child receives up to the age of seven years is maternal, internal or emotional education. When the training which the mother is supposed to impart finishes, then the child is sent to the guru or *acharya*. The rite which is conducted at that time is known as upanayan samskara. The word upanayan comes from the root *nayan*, which means the physical eye which perceives other forms, objects, colours and everything in the external nature, be it sky or earth. However, this physical eye does not help to see the thoughts inside. *Upa* plus *nayan* means the second eye which is needed to see the thoughts. Initiation into that training is upanayan samskara.

When upanayan samskara is performed, the child is given three threads. These three threads are the basis of his self-restraint. After the age of seven years, the child has to live under three kinds of self-restraint. Whether a householder, a sadhu or a sannyasin, everybody has to observe these three restraints. Similarly, a sadhu is supposed to have three staffs; a staff signifies discipline. Today women do not wear the thread, but initially both sexes were given the thread during this samskara. Girls also went to the gurukula to study, wore the thread and did Gayatri japa. Now the times have changed. The men could see that if women sat for japa, no one would make the bed, clean and wash, bring the tea, cook, or milk the cows. So they decided that she had to become their maid and thought, "Better we wear her thread as well." So the male became the bearer of six threads instead of three.

Upanayan is the name given to the ceremony conducted when the child was sent to gurukula for further studies. There he learnt to read and write. In addition, he learnt business if he was the son of a businessman; how to fight if he was the son of a warrior; chanting of the Vedas and the fire rituals if he was the son of a brahmin. He also learnt carpentry, stitching, shoe making and other skills if he belonged to such a family. So students learnt many things in those days, and that was the significance of upanayan. In the same way there are many rites which have continued until

now. These days children go to school before their seventh year. As soon as the child is conceived his admission to the school is reserved. This registration before birth is also a new kind of samskara.

If you examine the samskara of upanayan from a scientific point of view, you will find that it was a ritual designed to maintain the health and regeneration of important cells in the human body, which ordinarily would decay after the age of seven in a normal child. It is a normal physiological phenomenon that different glands develop and degenerate at every stage of development. The pineal gland develops until the age of seven years, and thereafter it degenerates. After the age of twelve years other endocrine glands begin to develop. In this way at every stage of life different glands develop and degenerate. These glands are responsible not only for a man's life but also for his personality, thoughts, emotions, actions and psyche. The most important gland is the pineal and then the thyroid, not the pituitary, because a practitioner of yoga can develop the pituitary at any time with the help of padmasana, pranayama, meditation, worship of God, japa or whatever method is adopted.

Along with formal education, children should also listen to bhajans and God's name because these things have great value. If children begin to read *Ramayana*, they automatically become literate. But the paradox is that by the time our generation becomes literate, the next generation will again have stopped reading. It has been said that the worst weakness of democracy is that by the time you teach one generation, the next generation of fools is born. Therefore, educating people is important, but it is even better if females are educated instead of males, because then the next generation automatically becomes educated. However, a father always prefers to educate the boys and he neglects the girls, thinking, "When she marries she will go to someone else's house, so why should I waste my resources on her?" The father does not think ahead but the mother does.

Mother India

Women are the main asset in the Indian family. When the wife comes to her husband's home, she does not come empty-handed, but he goes to her house like a beggar to fetch her. It is she who manages all the expenses of the marriage. She comes to his house with a full set of pots, suitcases, a cycle, a rickshaw, a scooter, a car, a TV, a video set, an audio set, jewellery, and also a minimum of sixty to seventy thousand rupees in cash. She comes as Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, and he keeps her there as his servant. Even her son won't clean the pots and utensils. Her children leave their plates on the table after eating, so that she, the mother, will clean up. The VIP who came to her husband's house and filled it with wealth is today the maidservant. This is the biggest mistake of Indian society; it is like ploughing a field with an elephant or killing a mosquito with a cannon. People will have to rethink.

I have been a supporter of women and girls for many years. Many people have also said that Swamiji keeps girls with him. If not girls, then who shall I keep? Man wants to keep beautiful flowers with him, not thorns. No one keeps thorns in the house. My ashram thrived because I trained females and gave them responsible posts. Women are very sincere. They do not have the habit of smoking, drinking wine, gambling or going to the cinema. The administration

of the Bihar School of Yoga was never in my hands because I was mostly out travelling. I never saw the cheque books, pass books, registers or accounts. Here Swami Satsangi manages everything. It is not that the male swamis are redundant, each one has his place, but I am talking about women here.

Women have no ambitions except to become stable. Stability is their weakness as well as their quality. A woman will try to become stable wherever she goes, whether it is at her in-laws, in an office or in an ashram. A stable person whose mind and body are focused is needed to manage any institution. Today, if men try to run the household, they will fail because they are not good managers. Let them try to look after the kitchen, the children, the cleaning, the maintenance – everything will collapse. In the evening, instead of sugar there will be salt in the tea! Therefore, in the coming age the women of India must become Mother India, and it is our duty to see that this happens. Leave aside old ideas that men and women become impure if they touch each other. The touch of a woman, whether a mother, lover or wife, purifies and sanctifies a man. Similarly, the touch of a man makes a woman powerful. A woman touching a man and man touching a woman, both are important and have their place.

Make them Chandi

A woman is shakti, energy, power, but today if someone teases her on the road, she can't do anything. She picks up her sandal to defend herself, but no boy is afraid of that. When she tries to hit the boy with her sandals or bag, it doesn't put him off. Therefore, girls should learn some skills for self-protection, like karate, so if anyone teases them on the road they can just give him a kick and reorganize his skeletal structure. Then no boy will dare to look at a girl with bad intentions. Girls are not weak and defenceless by nature; it is the male who has made them that way in order to exploit them. A person who is weak can always be exploited, but not one who is strong. If a girl becomes strong then no one will be able to exploit her. Before a man can even open his mouth, she will have told him to shut up.

When a husband has a strong wife he cannot drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes or have illicit relationships with other women, because a strong wife will never allow it. She will tell him, “If you want to live properly then do so, otherwise get out and don’t come back.” A woman must have such authority, such power, such rights, so that she can pull the man’s ears and also keep a tight control on the keys. Here in the villages, the man drinks toddy, gets drunk, comes home and beats up his wife. The woman who has brought ten to twenty thousand rupees, a cycle, sarees, suits, a scooter, audio equipment and so on, is bashed up by her husband. This is a shameful act. The screws are loose in the husband’s head and the wife does not know how to tighten them up.

Deoghar is the cremation ground of Sati. Lord Shiva roamed around the whole world, mad with despair at the death of his consort Sati, carrying her dead body on his shoulders. During the journey the different parts of her body fell in different regions. The last part remaining on his shoulder was her heart, which fell here. Therefore, this is the seat of Devi’s heart. This is not the cremation ground of Shiva, but of Sati, and it is also the birthplace of the new *Devi*. The message for the awakening of woman will go out from here. Therefore, give a proper education to the women in your house, to your daughters, mothers and sisters, and make them Chandi.

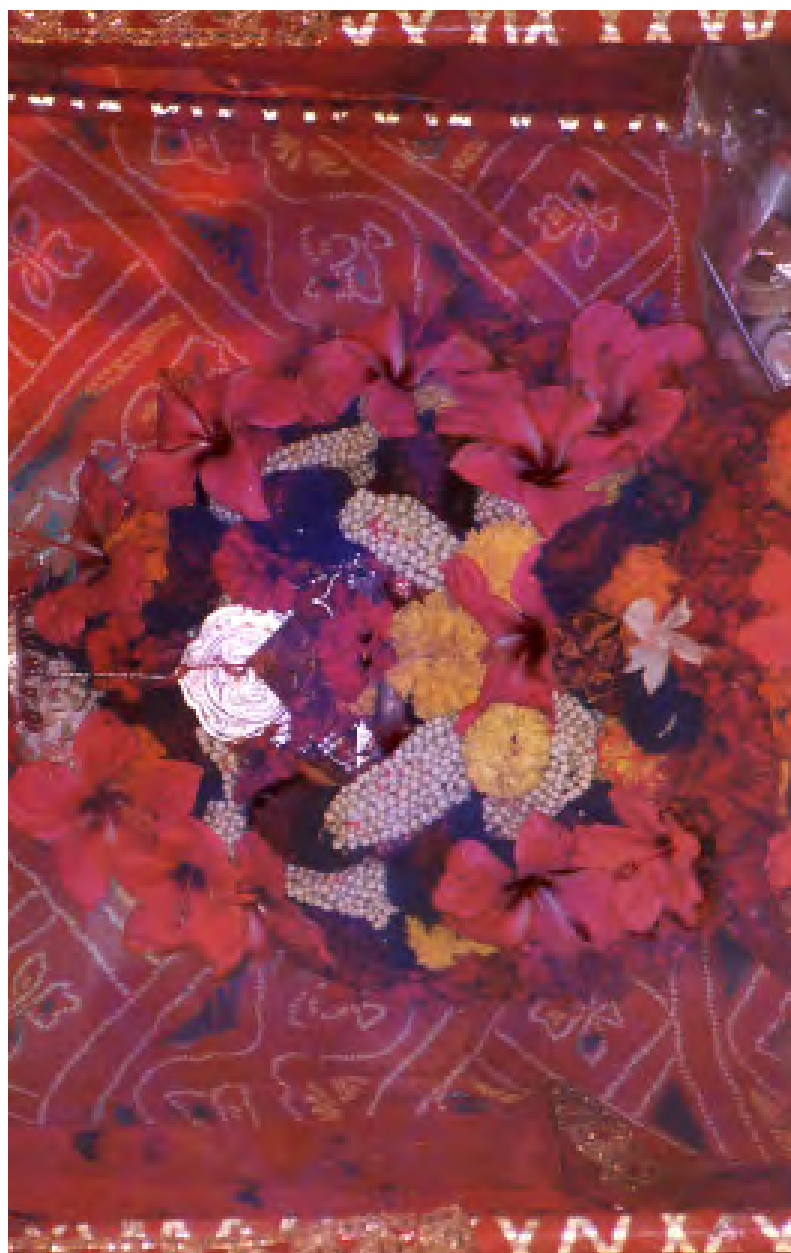
Importance of the genetic structure

The real nature of each male and female is not acquired from society, but it is inherent in the genetic structure. The DNA is the structure which determines the nature of human beings through which the spirit expresses itself. The genetic structure is different for males and females. Today, genetic engineers have determined different groups of genes in the male and female. A child is nothing but the genetic transfer of his parents. So the basic nature of a man and a woman definitely differs, yet when they live together under one roof, there must be some compatibility between them. Both are

not plus; one is plus and the other minus, one positive and the other negative, one time and the other space, and both live at opposite poles.

In physics it is said that time and space stand at opposite poles from each other. If time is in the north, space will be in the south. Similarly, a man and a woman are poles apart, but when they fall in love, then they move towards each other. At this time they move in opposite directions; the north pole moves towards the south and the south pole moves towards the north. So when these two poles of positive and negative, time and space, male and female, move towards each other, their paths are opposite. Therefore, the elements of the male and female natures are different from each other. The bodies may be alike, but the elements are different and both remain apart, like time and space. One is a bride, the other a bridegroom, and when they come towards each other, there must be some attraction. Ultimately, when they meet at one point, which happens during male and female sexual interaction, then something explodes.

When time and space meet in the centre, at the nucleus, then there is an explosion. This explosion also takes place in the consciousness during meditation when the two elements meet together at one point, and that is called yoga. The nuclear physicists call it fusion. There are two methods of nuclear reaction: one is fission and the other is fusion. This is the principle of the nuclear bomb. In fusion two particles unite with each other, and in meditation the two elements fuse together. These two elements are the individual soul, *jivatman*, and the cosmic soul, *paramatman*. When you do japa or meditation then there is a heavy fusion. This fusion does not occur up here in the head, but down there at the lowest point of the spine, because this human body is actually a combination of the male and female elements. In the *Ardhanarishwara Stotram*, both Shiva (the male aspect) and Shiva (the female aspect) are described as being integral parts of the one form of Ardhanarishwara:



Devi



Sri Swamiji



Swami Niranjana



Sri Swamiji with Swami Satsangi

*I bow to Shivaa and Shiva
in the form of Ardhanarishwara,
Whose body is half yellowish-white
like the champa flower,
Whose head has half the hair braided
and interwoven with flowers,
While the other half is white like camphor
and has matted hair.*

*I bow to Shivaa and Shiva,
Half of whose body is decorated with musk
and saffron, and appears affectionate,
While the other half is smeared with ashes
and has destroyed Cupid.*

*I bow to Shivaa and Shiva,
Whose feminine half is decorated with
tinkling ankle ornaments and gold bracelets,
And whose masculine half is decorated
with serpent anklets and bracelets.*

*I bow to Shivaa and Shiva,
Whose feminine half has large, lotus-like eyes with an
impartial look,
And whose masculine half has lotus-like eyes partially
closed, with a mysterious look.*

*I bow to Shivaa and Shiva,
Whose feminine half has locks of hair
decorated with garlands of Mandaar flowers,
And is wearing divine apparel,
And whose masculine half is decorated
with the garland of human skulls,
And is digambara, naked or sky-clad.*

*I bow to Shivaa and Shiva,
Whose feminine half has locks of hair
as black as the rain clouds,
And who has no master,*

*And whose masculine half has glorious
copper-coloured matted hair,
And who is the Lord of the Universe.*

*I bow to Shivaa and Shiva,
Whose feminine half is exalted
with the inclination of illusory creation,
And is the supreme mother of the universe,
And whose masculine half destroys creation through the
Tandava dance,
And is the supreme father of the universe.*

*I bow to Shivaa and Shiva,
Whose feminine half is wearing
the earring of shining white gems,
And is accompanied by Shiva,
And whose masculine half is wearing
the ornaments of great hissing serpents,
And is accompanied by Shivaa.*

We are all Ardhanarishwaras, half male and half female; half ida and half pingala; half sympathetic and half parasympathetic, half Ganga and half Jamuna, half Sun and half Moon. When these two elements meet in the state of meditation, there is an explosion of consciousness. The same explosion occurs in sexual intercourse, but it is used mainly to procreate children. In the scriptures it is said that the purpose of sexual union is threefold: i) progeny, ii) pleasure and (iii) awakening. For the purpose of reproduction, the couple does not need any training, because that has already been learnt from the animal incarnations; nobody needs to be taught this. Sexual union for the purpose of pleasure also needs no further elaboration. But how can one trigger off an awakening and then attain the state of yoga?

For the purpose of awakening, one should understand the two elements of Purusha and Prakriti. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (ch.13:19) it is said: “Know that Prakriti and Purusha are both beginningless, and also that all modifications

and qualities are born of Prakriti.” Purusha and Prakriti are the two eternal realities. Who is Prakriti and who is Purusha? The embodiment of Prakriti is the female and the embodiment of Purusha is the male, just as ida is feminine and pingala is masculine.

Females are always faithful

However, here it is important to understand that males may still retain animal instincts, but females do not have these qualities at all. For example, if the male says to the female, “Let us not have any sexual relationship,” the female will agree. But if the female says the same thing to the male, it will be impossible for him to agree. This actually happens, and it proves that there is no animal nature in the female. The animal instinct exists in the male, and the female compromises, surrenders and yields to it. If society permits, the female can remain chaste and celibate but the male cannot. This is his weakness because it is encoded in his genetic structure. The Creator has embossed on the head of a male that you are an animal, and on the female that you are a goddess. This is the destiny of both the male and female.

There is definitely no animal instinct in the nature of a female. Females find it easy to live the celibate life of an ascetic, but males will say, “How can I manage?” A female will say so only because she has one weakness; she wants to settle somewhere and stabilize. A female cannot tolerate instability. She has to settle somewhere and whether that situation is good or bad does not matter. Her partner may be a scoundrel of the worst order. He may be a fool or an unintelligent person, but she will adjust to him. At least, she will try her best to do so. No matter how dirty the husband may be, how much he cheats her or deceives her, she will try to cope and adjust. She reacts only when the situation becomes impossible, and that too if she is educated, because an educated woman can think and discriminate. Then she may decide to divorce him, otherwise a female can never be unfaithful. This is my own experience.

But Swamiji, Rama threw Sita out of his house and kingdom after winning her back again from Ravana. Women have not been permitted any rights in society since then.

Ever since Rama and Sita saw each other in the garden at Mithila, they loved one another intensely. That love was of the highest nature. While living in the world such events do happen, but that doesn't mean that there was some shortcoming, discrepancy, difference or rejection in the love of Sita and Rama. In certain situations, even between a mother and son, husband and wife or brother and sister, it may become necessary for one to tell the other to leave. After all, Rama was a responsible person and accountable for what was happening in his kingdom. However, he had an agreement with Sita and the whole world knows it. As per their agreement, if Sita and Rama lived apart, no one can say anything about it.

The separation of Sita and Rama, Sita's living in the kingdom of Ravana, Rama's trials in the forest, the killing of Ravana to rescue Sita – all these events tell us different things. They are not the continuation of one pattern, many patterns are interwoven here. A husband and wife may live separately for reasons which are not known to others. You can't blame either of them just because they live apart. You may wonder what the reason was for such an arrangement. What is wrong if Rama and Sita had an agreement to live apart? Sita stayed in the ashram of a sage. There is nothing wrong with a pregnant woman living in an ashram. Was it wrong for Rama to send Sita to an ashram because of social criticism? He did not take away any of her rights.

Why has the poet Tulsidas given low status to the womenfolk in *Ramacharitamanas*? In Sundarakanda (Doha 58) he states that:

*Dhol ganvaar sudra pasu naari;
Sakal taadnaa ke adheeraari:*

‘Low castes, the ignorant, drums,
animals and women all require beating.’

Here the word *taadnaa* does not mean to beat. *Taadnaa* is derived from the noun *traataka* and, therefore, should be interpreted as “to watch intently or carefully”. This sentence is an interpolation, perhaps added by people such as you. Tulsidas was a saint, a knowledgeable person, a jnani. The seers always propound that truth which is universal, uniform and eternal. It is never limited to a particular time, place or person. The most important thing, however, is not whether Tulsidas considers that women deserve a beating. Whether or not women deserve beating is immaterial because today women are considered as deserving love. Your mind is conditioned to old patterns of thinking. The nature of a woman can never be like that of an animal, but the nature of a man is like an animal.

Modern psychology propounds the same concept of animal instincts. It says that animal instincts are more predominant in the male nature than in the female nature. Wisdom predominates in women, a woman is never animal-like. The male body is more an expression of the animal nature than the female body. Male eating habits, social behaviour and sexuality are all animal-like. That is why men are more prone to heart attacks than women. Women are less prone to heart attacks because wisdom predominates in them. Women can discriminate between right and wrong, true and false. That is their nature. You do not have to teach a woman anything. She will always be able to adjust to reality in more efficient ways, because of her powers of discrimination.

After marriage a woman does not live forever in the house where she was born. She is transplanted to another house which belongs to her husband. If males had to be transplanted to the woman's house and fields they would probably create havoc, because they cannot adjust to reality so efficiently. A man adjusts to reality by lifting a stick, but a woman adjusts with her head bowed down. She thinks, “In this world full of worries and sorrow, one's desires are constantly stifled. I may speak a little, I may say something

now and again, but this is an illusion which will only last for a short time.” When the woman goes to her new home, therefore, she continues to bear everything. If her mother-in-law is hard on her, she tolerates it and somehow manages the situation. But if the husband’s mother-in-law were ever to speak harshly to him, he would immediately pick up his gun and warn her never to speak like that again. This is not a joke, it is the essence of modern psychology, the difference between the male and female natures.

Cultural Transition

Craftsmen belong to the line of *Vishwakarma*. They number more than eighty percent of the population in every country. In olden times the kings and emperors built huge temples just to employ them. We have to support the craftsmen. If they do not receive any support from society and the government, there will be bloodshed, because craftsmen are in the majority. They number in the millions. If there is no employment or mechanical engagement for these people, there will be a red revolution. Mahatma Gandhi said that cottage industries should be maintained everywhere. Along with technology and industry, there should also be handicrafts. This will solve many problems because cottage industries give employment to rural people. They may not earn a lot, but at least they can fill their bellies.

Today, due to heavy industry, there is an economic imbalance. One spinning wheel can earn thousands of rupees for the family, therefore, handicrafts are the culture of tomorrow. In the future a law will need to be made to shut down all the industrial machines, otherwise there will be a heavy strain on the electrical supply. We are already facing power shortages and load shedding throughout the country. Deoghar is in a good position, but Calcutta, Bangalore and even Delhi are in a very bad position. Everywhere machines are working to extract coal, to run the looms. Machines

mean electricity. The trend towards cottage industries has already started in western countries. In Italy, England, Australia and America, they are encouraging handicrafts and these handmade goods sell well. Many of the swamis here are very good at handicrafts.

During the great famine of Bengal, which was before my time, the weavers became unemployed because all the raw materials were being sent to factories in Birmingham and Manchester. Millions of weavers became destitute and were reduced to a hand to mouth existence. The main reason for this famine was the stopping of looms. When textile mills opened in Manchester and Birmingham, the weavers lost their business. Similarly, the shoe makers went out of business on account of shoe factories. When the timber business started, carpenters died of hunger. In this way, everybody left their professions and even the brahmins went to join the government services.

Change in lifestyle

Brahmins were the most respected caste in our society. When brahmins went to the court even the king had to stand up, because despite being a respected scholar, a brahmin always lived on alms like a beggar. But when brahmins started to join the government service and earn money, then people said, “We are better than them, although we may be shoemakers by caste.” Prior to this, brahmins had earned a lot of respect, not because of their caste, but because of their dedicated lifestyle.

A brahmin always lived on alms. The brahmins are a minority in India, not a majority. They are bound by strict rules: to perform yajna, pooja and samskara; to conduct gurukula and teach various sciences. In return they were given some sort of remuneration, such as cows, grain and clothing, on which their family subsisted. The brahmin’s wife was very simple and the number of his family members very limited; moreover he had to be very learned. That is why Indian society gave so much respect to the brahmins and sadhus, because they were learned and yet lived a life of self-imposed poverty.

However, if a sadhu starts living a five star life, he will not be respected. If I were to become a professor in some college or the editor of some magazine, which I'm capable of doing, no one would care for me. Similarly, the brahmins have lost their respected position because they have fallen short of their dharma. Now they own land and factories. They have become ironsmiths in TATA and shoemakers in BATA. If a brahmin works in BATA, he is a shoemaker. So, they have left their original duty and lifestyle.

Today the lifestyle has changed. In the olden days, during wartime, the emperor and commander in chief used to be first in line at the battle front; today they are last. The foot soldiers used to be last and now they come first. The emperor is somewhere in Delhi or Washington. He gives the orders but is nowhere to be seen, although he is in charge of everything.

In the same way, every type of work requires specialization, expertise and qualifications. So, if you want to become a cobbler, a tailor or an electrical engineer, you have to become qualified. The present system is based on qualifications, not on caste, and in every age the systems change. In the caste system, the carpenter's son became a carpenter, and his son became a carpenter. Now it is not necessary to follow this system. The father may be a doctor and the son a farmer, according to his inclination, capacity and the need of the times.

Where all the troubles start

Previously the social situation and needs changed every fifty years, but in our age changes are taking place every ten years. In fact, in western countries the rate of change is much faster. A fashion which is prevalent today is not seen tomorrow. The needs are changing and the mind is changing. The last century saw research on matter: better cars, generators, satellite systems, communication systems. What form the society will take in the future is uncertain because scientists who are now working with nuclear energy in order to produce weapons, missiles, satellites

and electrical generators will refuse to do so in the next century. I have spoken with many experts in Europe and in India. They have said that now scientific research should be diverted from matter to humanity because that is where all the troubles begin.

All the wars in the world start here in the head. Fights between brothers do not start from property disputes; they start up here in the mind. As long as they are unable to agree, the problem will not be solved. Unless man is able to train and evolve the mind, he cannot change the social and political systems. What the sages have said is not practical. Buddha wanted social reform, but he couldn't achieve it. More than 2,500 years ago he talked about secularism and destroying the caste barriers. The result was failure, because these ideas originate from the same head which believes in caste. Ideas from Buddha's head cannot change things in another's head. Love starts from the head. Disputes start from the head. Wars are not started in parliament buildings, on battlefields or in army headquarters, but in the minds of the people. As long as this mind is not treated, nobody can stop the wars, fights, thefts, looting, cheating, prostitution, gambling and so on. Special committees may be organized, but these divisions and differences will not end.

Science of the future

How can we correct this mind? Scientists in the next century will work in this direction. Research on the mind will start later in India because the mental condition here is not so bad, whereas in the West it is very poor. People will have to think about these questions: What is the science by which the mind behaves in a better way? What is that path through which the mind moves on the right track? As long as man does not move on that track, crime, looting, kidnapping and murder will not stop. Nobody will stop drinking or lying. Laws will be useless because they cannot put the human mind in order. In many Muslim countries they chop off the hands of thieves, but thefts still occur there because theft

is not stopped by cutting off the hands. It stops when you tighten the screws up here in the head.

Now the question arises: How is this tightening to be done? How can the mind be corrected? How can the antah karana of man be purified? This is the science of the future. In order to achieve this, research into human problems, into the problems of an individual, is necessary. Today man is sick and a sick man means a sick mind. A man with *raga* and *dvesha*, attraction and repulsion, a man with attachment and hatred is a sick man. How can a sick man be our leader? Suppose someone in your family, say your father, brother or son, becomes sick like that, what will happen in the house? Quarrels, fights, murders! In our history many people have been sick and even now most of the politicians are sick and these people are our leaders! They land us in wars and divide nations; there are murders and killings in which millions are put to death. What do they lose? Nothing.

There is only one way to remain sane in the midst of this chaos. The mind of man can be set on the right track only by a determined resolve to reach God. No other way, no drug or herb, can correct the mind. Man is born only for the purpose of experiencing the divine. There is no purpose in indulgence. Eating, drinking, sleeping, producing children is all indulgence. These urges are in every species: dogs, cats, elephants, horses, donkeys and pigs. The desire for food, sleep and sex is in everyone.

Purpose of life

However, there is one special quality in man, only he can sing God's name, do japa and meditate on God. Does the cow or the dog ever think about God? Do they ever go to the temple to sing *Jai Jagdish Hare*? There are eighty-four lakh species in this world and in all of them exist the four instincts: desire for food, desire for sex, desire for sleep, and fear of death, right from the smallest bacteria or insect to the largest elephant. But apart from human beings, none can ever think about God. Only human beings are capable of

talking about God, listening to stories about God, thinking about God, offering their lives to God, and this is the highest aim of human existence.

If I give you a knife to cut vegetables and you cut somebody's throat with it, that is a misuse of the knife. Similarly, God gave you this life for the purpose of chanting His name and you have misused it for sensory pleasures. You have misused the body, so you have to bear the fruits of your actions. The day you realize this, all your attachments, hatred, sin and crookedness will slowly diminish like the waning of the moon during the dark fortnight. The negative qualities will automatically subside with this realization, but before that nothing will help. You may go to psychologists, psychotherapists, drink potions, eat herbs and take drugs, but nothing will work.

All the saints, such as Mohammed, Christ, Guru Nanak, have said the same thing. If a man wants to improve himself then let him behave as a man and not as an animal. All animals eat, sleep and procreate, so what is the difference between a man and an animal? There is only one difference: animals cannot discuss or understand God, although they live by the grace of God. A man can talk about God and think about Him and this is a very big difference.

So why misuse the body, why waste this incarnation? Once it is realized that the main purpose, the main agenda of life is divinity, the whole code changes, the entire direction of the clock changes automatically. But nobody wants to realize this for themselves. Everyone thinks, "If I worry about God, then what will happen to my children?" The maximum concern is for the children and family, not for realizing God. Therefore, man is unable to deal with the mind or to make positive use of his life.

Religion, Politics and Sannyasa Dharma

Buddha was not a Buddhist; Christ was not a Christian, Roman Catholic or Protestant; and Mohammed was not a Muslim. Similarly, supposing you start a religion in my name after I die, that cannot be proclaimed as my religion because I was not that. You may start a religion in my name, but I never belonged to that religion, nor can I be the founder of that religion. That is the case with all the prophets. It is a misfortune that the philosophy and teachings of a saint later become a religion and that saint is proclaimed to be the head of that religion without his even knowing it. Later on, it strikes us that Jesus Christ was not a Christian and Guru Nanak was not a Sikh. Lord Rama and Lord Krishna were not Vaishnavas, and Lord Shiva was not a Shaivite.

Who knows, maybe Lord Shiva used to put the vertical mark of the Vaishnavas on his forehead, and maybe Lord Rama used to put on the three striped *tripundra* of the Shaivas. But there is no history of that. It is the devotees who have imposed these icons on them. Nobody has thought about it. Guru Nanak might have had a beard, but just because he had a beard does not make him a Sikh. I sometimes keep my beard and hair like a Sardar, but I am not a Sikh. Suppose I keep my hair like that and later my disciples start a religion in my name and proclaim that all who follow that religion should keep beards! That

does not make it my religion. Paramahansa is my title, not my religion. My faith lies in the vedic dharma, but these distortions take place later on, and that cannot be avoided.

The misfortune of all realized saints and mahatmas is that the religion established by their disciples in their name, later on takes political support and spreads. When religion and politics shake hands, distortion takes place. When religion goes into politics, scandals arise because an issue is necessary to show up the opposition, and the religion will be blamed for something or other.

When religion does not become involved with politics, any criticism and blame which fall on it are not taken seriously. But the moment religion is involved in politics, it assumes a high profile and becomes vulnerable to sudden collapse. Religion should be based on spiritual traditions and the growth of a spiritual idea. Similarly, the growth of a religious institution must depend only on its spiritual power. A religious institution or tradition should never shake hands with the political system. An individual may enter politics, but not as a representative of a religious institution or tradition. If the religious leader is involved in politics, then the very traditions on which the institution is built will die and the political system will become corrupt.

Religion should be based on spirituality alone, this is the most important factor for the growth of religion. Saints and sannyasins should be of a high spiritual calibre. Whenever saints, gurus and sadhus are high-minded, then religion prospers. But if the spiritual leaders become mean and narrow-minded, and deviate from their path, then political support is needed to carry the religion forward. Then a bill must be passed in the parliament to promote the religion. If sadhus and sannyasins also start saying things like, "Give us a free ticket to travel by train or else we will not give you a vote," this will create a difficult situation. If a ticket is not given, the sadhus will simply go without a ticket, or else they will not travel anywhere. A sadhu should not fight for his rights. A sadhu has duties only, not rights.

Dharma of sannyasins

Sannyasins must be aware of their duty only, their *dharma*. Householders need to fight for their rights, otherwise they will face many difficulties. But this is not necessary for sannyasins because they can live with the bare minimum. Sadhus and saints lead very simple lives. Although Swami Vivekananda conquered the whole world, he lived a simple life. Swami Sivananda, whose disciples you will find in every continent, used to wear one dhoti. He was such a simple man. He never took tea or coffee, he did not eat rice. He was South Indian but never ate *rasam*, *sambar*, *dosa* or *idli*. He took only three thin chapatis and one *katori* of *mung dal*. What rights will a person of this nature fight for?

Sannyasins can walk barefoot for miles and they will always get two *rotis* at any village where they stop. Food may be offered to them with devotion or if not, they can ask for *bhiksha*. When sadhus and sannyasins can exist without the support of others, why should they fight for their rights? It is not rights but duty which sustains sannyasins. A sadhu, a saint or a sage has only one duty: to protect dharma by incorporating it into his life. Dharma is protected only when it is implemented in one's life. Sannyasins have no ashram. There is no money for an ashram. Whatever money comes to them goes out again, because all sadhus and sannyasins are trustees. The word *sannyasa* comes from the root *nyasa* which means 'a trust'.

So all the sannyasins are trustees. Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity, told the sages and sannyasins, "You will be my trustees and whatever wealth comes to you must not be kept for yourselves. You are to live simply and eat only once a day." This is the dharma of a sannyasin. It is not the dharma of a sannyasin to wear silk dhotis; to apply fragrant sandalwood powder, oils and creams; to wear costly shoes and keep a few thousand rupees in his pocket. Anyone can wear *geru* and we cannot stop him, but the dharma of a sannyasin is to live in poverty, to adopt self-imposed poverty. If a sannyasin takes breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks in

between, then it is better to remain a householder and bear the abuses of your wife. When the time comes to get your daughter married, then see how your blood pressure shoots up and what your diabetes feels like. If you adopt sannyasa then live like a sanniyasin. If you desire to wear nice clothes then leave sannyasa.

Earlier, when I used to go abroad, I faced great problems. I always travelled first class with my secretary. When I stayed in hotels I couldn't sleep on those soft mattresses, so I used to make my bed on the floor and sleep there. Although I could not follow the rules fully, still I used to think, "God, you have given me so much luxury and comfort today, but don't make me their slave. One day I have to live like a sanniyasin." So now that time has arrived and whatever comes here is not for me, nor for Bihar School of Yoga, but for helping the common man. Householders who have had enough comfort and luxury in their lives should live like sanniyasins for some time. Sannyasa is not about getting rice, chapatis and halwa, but about helping those who are in need.

Helping others

The idea of helping others is very easy to have, but when it comes to implementing it, then the difficulties arise, despite being a renunciate. Here, within three days my store was full, but to distribute everything requires time and planning. We have to make a list of every member of each household in every village: who is the head, who is the son, who is the daughter, who is getting married. This information is fed into the computer, then bundles are made according to the list and distributed by trucks, tractors and cars. Plenty of manpower is required for this work. It takes more than three days to prepare bundles for one village and that too is done with the help of the local people. So, helping others is not an easy job. It requires organizational skills and so many great qualities.

People think that I am going to create an infrastructure here where they can stay, but I am not going to do that at all. That is the mistake I made in Munger and I am not going

to make it again. You know the story of the sadhu who lived in the forest. Once, while the sadhu's loincloth was drying, a rat came and gnawed it. So, to kill the rat he had to get a cat. The cat needed to drink milk, so he brought a cow. The cow needed shelter, so he constructed another hut and so on. When his guru came he found a fully-fledged ashram in the place of his little hut. This is what happens and I am not going to get caught like that.

It is better to live in the villages and teach the local people some skills that will help them to improve their conditions. You can teach the women how to sew fashionable clothes in the latest styles and then find a market for these garments in the city, sell them there and send a money order back to the village. This is not charity. Charity begets poverty. In order to help people, you should make them self-sufficient; give them an opportunity to build their skills; give them auto-rickshaws and teach them to drive so they can earn forty or fifty rupees daily. That is more than enough for them to live on. You can also build houses for the villagers. First you have to get coal to make bricks, then bake them and use them for construction. It takes two months or more to build one house. A civil engineer is also needed for the construction work, to decide on the area, how to make the pillars, where to put the rods, the structure of the foundations, the height of the plinth. All these things have to be looked into.

To do good works requires great skill and expertise. Thinking of others may be a very good quality but it hardly requires any talent. "Let everyone be happy" – how long does it take to think that? It takes no time or skill to feel that. Your thoughts are very good and you have prayed for everyone to be happy, but what have you actually done? To implement that positive thought you should live like a sannyasin for a few days. You will obtain two advantages from this. One advantage is that others will benefit. The other is that you will realize that one can live like a sannyasin as well as manage the household, run the factory, industry or even

the government. You can do everything more efficiently when you live like a sannyasin with the feeling of dedication and non-attachment. Every action can be done in the spirit of sannyasa. This is written in the *Gita* as well.

A sannyasin should abide by the dharma of a sannyasin, otherwise it is useless to change the garb, name or sect. Sannyasa has only one dharma: to work for the welfare of others. Saints are born for the welfare of others and that is their only work. Saints are not born for salvation, for gaining knowledge or for mere worship. Saints are born to prepare the ground for the arrival of God. If I am born for the Lord, then I must complete the groundwork for him. If each saint or sannyasin takes moral responsibility for the development of one *panchayat* in India, there will be no need for a five year plan anymore. We would require only a one year plan because we have plenty of resources. Everything is possible where there is goodwill.

Emancipation of the Villages

In Bihar, the public welfare activities and plans for development have not been extended to the villages at all. All the development has been restricted to big cities like Patna, Jamshedpur and Ranchi. Those cities have good buildings, schools, colleges, hospitals and nursing homes. Good roads, bridges, parks and hotels are constructed there, but the villages have nothing. The politicians have not forced the government to reach out to the villages. Reaching out to the villages means that no one in a village dies hungry, and that when their cows come on heat they have the facilities for quick insemination, and do not have to walk for ten or twelve kilometres, dragging the cow along behind them.

Another neglected aspect is primary health care. I am not talking about serious diseases like TB, just routine diseases. The villagers don't have proper drinking water; they get jaundice from infected water. The women and children of the villages have not yet understood that education is for their benefit. In other states like Haryana, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, the rays of progress and development have touched each and every village. The sun of progressive modern culture has illuminated them. Adequate facilities to live a decent life have reached the villages in these states.

The farmers of Haryana are much better off than here, because there the basic commodities of water, seeds and

fertilizer have been provided and they have also been given moral encouragement. Farmers are a struggling community because five acres of land requires the same infrastructure as fifteen, whether it be an irrigation pump, a tractor, or a plough and bullocks. But the villagers here don't have these things. So what do they do? One farmer has a bull and another farmer also has a bull, so they join the two and plough their land in turn. Since arriving here, I have started donating bullocks because farming cannot be done without them, just as your crops cannot be grown without seeds. Farmers who live in the villages are very poor and their biggest need is not land, but facilities. The government has given them land, but agriculture is not done by a land lease alone; water, seeds and a plough are needed.

Government support was given to the production of coal, steel and mica; the same support was not given to agriculture. The farmer is the backbone of our country. A family cannot eat coal and steel. For building construction you need cement and iron, for fuel you need coal, but the farmers, who are the backbone, the root and basis of our society, have been deprived. I see this all around me and that is the reason why Bihar has remained backward. As long as the leaders ignore the basic needs of the poor villages, their leadership will remain fruitless for themselves as well as for society. It will have no positive or permanent consequences.

The most important thing for Indians is the villages. The real emancipation of India will happen only with the emancipation of the villages. The poverty is mainly in the villages and since all the public utilities are concentrated in the cities, the village people are migrating there. In the cities there are schools and colleges, but the villages have nothing. If a villager is posted to Deoghar or Patna, he calls his family and children there and the village is left behind. All the people who are weak, crippled and devoid of quality are left behind. How can we bring back that quality? The educated, capable, prosperous people have come from the villages; we are the aggressive community. But now there is no aggressive

community in the villages and no facilities or resources are available. What can be done to raise the standard of living so that we can live there once again?

The needs of a village are basically those of a farmer. A labourer has no special needs; he can go from place to place. But how can a farmer leave his land and go away? Five bighas of land is enough to support a family if it is properly utilized. In Australia, the ashram had a farm of around five bighas and the swamis did the farming there. They grew their own vegetables and had a cold storage facility. Every morning the swamis would harvest the vegetables and put them in cold storage. People came to the ashram to practise asana and pranayama and left carrying carrots and cauliflowers.

Patal Ganga

This village is pure both from the spiritual and the material point of view. There is no air or noise pollution here like as in Calcutta and other cities. This place is absolutely quiet. Deep tube well bores should be the main source of water supply here so that there is no need to depend on rains. I feel that in this area there is a huge reservoir of underground water. I have perceived this by observing the lightning. It is a well-known fact that where there are frequent episodes of thunder and lightning, there has to be a sizeable underground water resource. The frequency and magnitude of lightning episodes is far greater here than in Munger. At times when there is lightning I feel as if it has struck right above us. It is an incredible sight, like Star Wars.

If we could drill a bore well of ten or twelve inches in diameter and distribute that water to nearby villages, it would be a wonderful resource. These people would be very happy not to need a pond because the cost of digging a water pond and drilling a tube well is the same. Moreover, to fill the pond you have to rely on rainwater, but the tube well is a perennial source of water. The electricity supply here is very efficient so we can fit a pump. We also have our own transformer, so there is no problem.

We are also trying to find out about the possibility of confirming the presence of underground water by means of satellite. We shall then be able to drill at the right point. These days you can confirm underground water and mineral sources by satellite. Once we are successful then you can come to see this Patal Ganga. If we are able to extract water in large quantities we can then convey it to the neighbouring fields as we already have long aluminium pipes which can cover about one kilometre. Villagers can also come and bathe in that water. In the early mornings people go to bathe in rivers and ponds during the month of Kartika, so that can also be done here. We will instal ten or twelve taps so that the water can flow into the fields. Then people will have safe, clean drinking water and the facility for a Kartika bath at the same place. This is what I think, and if it is God's wish then it will be done, and that will bring great relief to this impoverished area.

Necessity of ability

Housing is another problem which villagers face. A thousand houses can be constructed here in a month, but manpower is required to build a house. One person can construct one house in one month and by that time the season is over. To build a house, bricks must be made. One person has to supervise the quality of the brick-making because if you leave it to the local people it will be hopeless. Other swamis can continue the tractor and truck loading and unloading with everybody's help.

Therefore, it is necessary that dedicated people work for a period of time, offering their abilities as a form of *nishkama seva* or karma yoga. They do not have to give all their time, just a month or two whenever they are free from their personal commitments. This can be called six months seasonal sannyasa, but it is not applicable to everyone. To help others you need to be qualified. When you think of helping others, it is an emotion, kindness is an emotion. But in order to actually do something emotions won't work. It

is ability which works, and this ability must be an inherent quality. One must know about construction, one must know how to deal with human beings.

Emotion in itself is not sufficient, even money is not sufficient. When it comes to actually doing something to help others one must be very practical. Last year we received cows, rickshaws, handcarts, sewing machines etc., in abundance. However, these things have not all been disposed of even now, because there are practical considerations. We have to find the right recipient for every cow. We can't just keep on giving cows. We have to find out whether the recipient has ever kept a cow and whether he has the means to keep the cow. It takes almost one week to investigate one man.

Self-employment

Two things are very important: shelter and self-employment. Education is secondary and it is not picking up here at the pace it should, although in the last year, while I have been talking to the people, I have noticed that education has picked up a little. Parents are sending girls to school and some have even given me a hint that they want to learn English. Swami Satsangi speaks in English, so some of the girls are now jealous. It is a good thing if jealousy can work in a constructive way. This is a positive aspect of jealousy. So some of the parents have said, "We want our children to learn music and English," but I have kept quiet because I don't think that it is as important as housing and self-employment.

By self-employment I mean that the men can find work like pedalling a rickshaw or pushing a handcart, and there is sewing for the women. The villagers have started to make things and sell them, particularly the widows. I have broken the isolation of womanhood here, and now they go out. Basically all the villagers, especially the womenfolk, desire pleasure, prosperity and progeny. A better life, a better house, prosperity and children are always in their minds. Everyone wants a nice home. This floor on which we are

sitting was initially rough brickwork. The village ladies saw it when they first came here to meet me. When they came again some time later and saw marble flooring in place of the bricks, they said, “Swamiji, you have made it beautiful.”

Similarly, they appreciate this whole place and say, “Before this was a wild area, now you have made it auspicious.” If they can appreciate my area, I pray to God, “May they also have similar comforts and facilities in their area.” I can manage that, but the biggest problem is who will share the work? I don’t want a person who comes here in the morning for eight hours duty and returns to his home in the evening. I want a person who lives here for a minimum of six months at a time. I need a civil engineer who knows construction work and the basic tenets of civil engineering.

Once we constructed a house for Tetu. I gave the charge of that building to a swami who is not here now. But he didn’t construct it properly. I told him to give the roof a slope of 37 degrees, as it helps to drain the water in the rainy season, but he was careless and did not provide an adequate slope for water drainage. Perhaps he thought, “A slope is a slope, why bother about 37 degrees?” So he just gave the slope which he felt would be sufficient to let the water flow. Now the roof leaks the whole year round and I will have to remake the entire roof. Isn’t that a waste?

Swamiji, how do you feel when the village people sell the gifts you have given them?

Well, this doesn’t really happen but when and if it does, my attitude is very simple. If I give a cycle rickshaw and the recipient sells it and pockets the money, I won’t mind. This is the philosophy of God. A social worker expects the person whom he helps to be honest. I don’t expect that. I am a realist, not an idealist. Has God put any conditions on what He has given to all of us? No. If we misuse what He has given, does He punish us? No. True generosity is giving without conditions. Suppose you give someone a blanket worth one hundred and fifty rupees, but he goes to the market and sells

it for a mere fifty rupees. Then you feel discouraged and begin to think, I gave him a blanket and he sold it. Why did I give it at all? If you feel like this about a blanket, imagine how it would be if God were to have the same attitude about all the things He has given to you. God has given us so many things, but we have misused them. If we can misuse the things given to us by God, then anybody can misuse the things given to them by me. I am a mere human being.

Therefore, my philosophy is very clear on this point. I give an apple to someone as *prasad*. He gives it to his girlfriend. That girl has another boyfriend and so she gives the apple to him. That boy is my disciple, so he offers the same apple back to me! Whose fault is it if the apple returns to me? How will I feel in that situation? I will be absolutely disturbed because I have an ego that says, “I am the one who gives, who helps others.” So, the thought that I am helping others is pure ego, therefore, I never think of it.

Swamiji, how does non-attachment come?

It comes by diverting your attachment. I also feel for these villagers. Is that not attachment? What you feel for your mother, father, wife and children is personal attachment. Because she is your mother, he is your father, she is your wife and he is your son, therefore, you have attachment. But when I have attachment for you, although you do not belong to me, that is considered as unselfish attachment. Then that is no longer attachment. When the attachments are no longer selfish, but are projected to benefit people who are in no way related or connected to you, then that attachment no longer has a binding force.

There can be no affection or service without attachment. No great work can be done without attachment. All the great acts of patriotism were performed due to attachment. What is patriotism? What is love for one's nation? It is another form of attachment. Therefore, don't try to fight against passion, anger, greed and attachment unnecessarily by adopting a wrong attitude; simply change its direction.

Why Ganesha Drank Milk

For those who believe that Ganesha did drink milk there are no doubts or questions. However, for those who believe that he did not, there is no answer. Therefore, let us put aside this question of whether it happened or not. The question should be: if it did happen, then what is the purpose? Why did it happen? If it did not happen there is nothing to discuss. But if it happened that Ganesha drank milk in India, England, Italy, America, Australia and many other countries, then there has to be a purpose for such an event. If something happens in your family but not elsewhere, that cannot be considered an event; that is your personal experience. But if many people elsewhere have the same experience as you are having, then it is not a personal experience, it is an event. Similar events have taken place in history. Two thousand years ago, the star of Bethlehem shone and many people saw it and understood its significance. Was it not an event? At that time the people must have questioned whether or not it happened. But we know that it happened because the evidence is there, and definitely a higher hierarchy was involved.

Whether it is the star of Bethlehem or the star of David, they are all powers of the higher hierarchy of *devatas* or divinity. When Lord Buddha was born, lotuses started blooming; that was an event. According to a story, Padma

Sambhava was born from a lotus. The word *padma* means 'lotus', *sambhava* means 'blooming'. Similar things happened when enlightened saints like Mohammed, Moses and Krishna were born. Although Krishna was born in a prison in Mathura, things started happening in Gokul where he later shifted. The day Lord Rama entered the womb of Queen Kausalya, all the people of the entire world were encompassed by auspiciousness and beauty. It is written in Balakanda of *Ramayana* that the day Lord Rama descended into the womb, auspiciousness was spread everywhere.

What is auspiciousness? The air became pure and fragrant, the trees and plants began to bloom, the cows began to give milk, the sick became well again. This is auspiciousness. So, whenever God has incarnated in this creation, auspiciousness has manifested everywhere. A sign becomes apparent and that is the evidence. Since there is historical evidence, you can't dismiss it. The event of Ganesha drinking milk should also be understood in that light. It is a kind of proclamation or announcement that a higher power is now on Earth. Either a mother is bearing him or he has already been born. Who might that fortunate mother be who is bearing God in her womb, or has already given birth to him?

Birth of an incarnation

Why did Ganesha drink milk? He drank milk in Delhi, Bombay, England, Australia and many other countries, wherever people worship Lord Ganesha. People told me that they offered him milk and he drank it. Now the question arises, why did he drink the milk? Whenever an incarnation of God descends on Earth, certain signs appear. There are many great people in this world. Anybody can be a great man. Gandhiji was a great man. However, the incarnation of God is something entirely different. The incarnation of God means the energy of God enters into a womb. This happens whenever righteousness and dharma decline and demonic forces increase. So, when righteousness is destroyed, God incarnates in a human body to relieve suffering.

Is righteousness being destroyed today? Yes it is. Of course, it is fine to have a job, money, a house, electricity, water, transport and other facilities. But does dharma exist today or not? Are people with demonic tendencies being born now or not? Today, there are many problems facing mankind and they are increasing. The time is right for a higher power to come and solve the problems of humanity, because the political, social and spiritual leaders are unable to do anything to relieve the situation. If this situation continues for another decade or two or three, everything will be worse. After all, the facilities which science is providing us with have nothing to do with dharma. It is a person's thoughts and life which build a society of dharma. You may have all the facilities, a lot of money and a very good job, but that does not necessarily mean that you are following a life of righteousness and virtue.

Prevalence of adharmā

Dharma is life in God and in truth. Nowadays who can say, "I am living for God and for truth"? People can only say, "I am living for my family." Today there is no dharma at all. Do you move on the path of dharma? No, your life has only one aim: eat, drink and be merry. A man is not born only to earn and to eat, and this fact has been stated by all the sages and saints. The *Ramayana*, *Bhagavat*, Bible and Koran, all the religious scriptures state that the aim of human birth is to attain God, to make efforts to realize God. How much time do you give to the effort of attaining God? You don't give any time, you just go to the temple and pour water on the lingam so that God is pleased and does not curse you. You do some chanting on some auspicious occasions, say some prayers, ask for some boons and you are finished.

What time do you give to developing your relationship with God, to living that relationship? You don't find time for God. You get up thinking about your job and go to sleep thinking about your job. The only truths in your life are family, children, job and money, nothing else. That attitude

has resulted in an empty and undisciplined lifestyle. When you want to drink, no one stops you. As long as you have money, you can eat and drink anything you want. This is the path of demons. Those who wish to walk on the path of dharma must think before acting: Should I do this or not? Will it help or hinder me on my path? But the demons don't think of right and wrong. As long as they have the money they do whatever they wish. This means that there is no fear of God.

So, in this age, nobody is ready to talk about dharma. Everyone is moving on the wrong track, not only in India but throughout the world. The leaders misguide the people for their own selfish motives. They tell lies to become members of the Legislative Assembly or the Parliament. But if someone tells them they are cheating they will shoot him dead. All the politicians tell lies in all the capitals, but who can raise a voice? Even sadhus deceive others, not to speak of politicians. A sadhu should never cheat because he is an embodiment of dharma, righteousness and compassion. If even the sadhu, who is the protector and the embodiment of dharma, moves away from his path, then what can be expected from politicians and businessmen?

What is the aim of life today? To get your daughters married before the age of fifteen years and despatch them to their in-laws, and to earn money anyhow, by any means. People have lost the spiritual aim in life, so nobody can correct things now. The rate of inflation is rising higher and higher. When we were children, the price of ghee was six kilos per rupee. Now the rate is one hundred and twenty five rupees per kilo! If a man does not resort to cheating, how will he survive? It is difficult to provide a full meal for the family. Many things show that man has moved away from his path and there is no one to bring him back. Even if I explain the situation and you understand it, still you won't be able to do anything about it because everywhere these conditions exist.

The Earth, which is already fifty billion years old, has increased its weight. In *Ramayana* the story goes that in this same predicament Earth once went to Brahma and said,

“Lord, I cannot bear this weight anymore.” The weight on Earth is being increased by billions of people over billions of years. If fifty billion people urinate and defecate three times a day, if they throw out tons of rubbish everyday, if they open factories which emit toxic gases and wastes, how will the Earth bear this weight? We are polluting the Earth and she is not able to manage it. This Earth, which we call Mother Earth, is not inert matter. If it were inert then how could it produce so much? Grains and fruits all come from the Earth. Even insects and microbes are born from the Earth. Earth is not inert, Earth is energy.

God comes incognito

The incident of Ganesha drinking milk is just to let people know that the incarnation of God has been born, or is about to be born. He has descended either into the womb or onto the Earth. When God descends, He does so in a very humble way. He doesn't come like a leader, prime minister, president, king or monarch. He comes in a very humble way. All the great prophets were born incognito. Krishna, Christ, Moses and Mohammed were born incognito, so nobody would know. They all came secretly. Today we know that Lord Krishna was born, but during his childhood nobody knew whether he was born or not, or even who he was. Kansa was searching for him but could not find him. Even in Gokul, Nand and Yashodha, the ones who raised him, did not know who he was. Only the saints knew where God was born.

When Mohammed was born, no one knew who he was. He worked in a wayside inn where the camel caravans stopped, bringing water and fodder for the camels, helping the travellers put up their tents and arranging for their food. The whole day he worked as a servant, and in the middle of the night he would go with his black blanket up on the mountain to meditate. He would meditate and fast in secret, so nobody knew he was a great man. Yet today the Muslim religion which he founded is the largest in the world and it is very strong.

Jesus Christ was born amongst bundles of hay in a stable where oxen and cows were kept. His mother nursed him there amidst the hay and then she had to flee. The father of Jesus was a simple carpenter. Christ also appeared to be so ordinary that later, when the Roman soldiers captured him, he had to be identified. They did not know who Christ was, and somebody had to say, "This is Christ". Although he was very popular among the masses, still the authorities did not know his face. Somebody had to identify him by touching his feet or kissing him, indicating that he was Christ, and in this way he was arrested. Now, of course, he is the king of kings and his religion dominates the globe.

However, Christ was not a Christian by birth; he was born a Jew. Similarly, Buddha was not a Buddhist; he was born a Hindu. The founders of every religion did not belong to that religion from birth. They were born into some other religion. So, just as Krishna, Christ and Mohammed were born, the incarnation of Lord Ganesha will be born into the family of some poor, suffering person. He won't be born into the family of a rich man. The day Ganesha drank milk, the telephone began to ring here from early morning. Two hundred telephone calls came throughout the day! They wanted to know what was happening, but it was during *Chaturmas* and I was not available. I had to stay in my sadhana place, guarded by Bholenath, and nobody could come there.

Why the question arises

What is difficult to understand is why people question this event? Whatever occurs is by His grace. Faith belongs to the heart; it doesn't arise from hearing someone's explanations. Faith and trust represent the internal purity and simplicity of the heart. Whoever is pure and innocent at heart has faith and trust. Then what is the need to ask somebody else? If you want to talk about miracles then the entire creation is a miracle. The miracle of Lord Ganesha drinking milk is just one of them. If you observe well and meditate with an open

mind, you will find that you are the greatest miracle. If a millionth part of you is seen under a microscope, that is also a miracle and the greatest miracle is that every part of you is functioning automatically. You think that you are thinking, but actually you don't know how to think. There is a force which makes you think, which digests your food, which keeps you alive with every breath, and keeps you for nine months in the mother's womb. Isn't this a great miracle?

Global event

The meaning of Ganesha drinking milk is that an incarnation of Ganesha has taken place. Ganesha drinking milk is not an experience, it is an event. An experience can be subjective; you may see it and I may not. Ganesha drinking milk is not an experience, it is a global event. It happened in USA, England, Germany, Australia and Africa and the people there, the journalists who were covering the news, had to admit, "Yes, I saw it." When Ganesha drank milk, the news was publicized throughout the world. In the West there are many non-believers, especially amongst news reporters, but even they said, "This is happening and it has happened in many countries." Therefore, Ganesha drinking milk is a global event. It is an announcement to everybody about the incarnation of God.

The fact that this phenomenon occurred in many places simultaneously means that the incarnation of that divine power will not confine himself to one country. The event of Ganesha drinking milk is not an Indian event, it is a global event and we cannot ignore it. There have been many sceptics throughout history. Kansa was told, "Be careful, Krishna is coming to assassinate you," but he was a sceptic. Ravana was a sceptic. You will always find sceptics and non-believers. In this age it is the non-believers who control the media as well as the bureaucracy, education, parliament and the legislature. Generally, newspapers mock such events. If something extraordinary takes place they make a mockery of it and many innocent people read the reports. However, the coverage of this event was different.

Ganesha syndrome

One thing should be remembered: Shiva is an ascetic but Ganesha is not. Ganesha is tip-top and he belongs to the younger generation who want to enjoy all the good things in life: good food, dress, education, home, society. That is why Ganesha began to drink milk, to tell you all, “I am coming.” That was an announcement. Ganesha drinking milk was not a miracle, it was a global event. Shiva does not announce when he is coming because nobody wants to wear a langoti. Today people want to wear safari suits because this is Ganesha’s culture. Ganesha was a scholar, a *vidvan*. When Vedavyasa was inspired to write the epic *Mahabharata*, he requested Ganesha to be the scribe because Ganesha was a scholar.

Ganesha dresses well and lives in a comfortable, clean place. He doesn’t live like Shiva, sleeping and eating anywhere. Shiva doesn’t mind living with dogs, bulls and cats. Ganesha says, “No, everything has to be proper.” He eats ladoos. So, when people ask, “Why Ganesha?” I reply that Shiva will never ask for milk. He will say, “Give me anything.” If Shiva comes this is what he will say. If I come to your door I will say, “Give me whatever you can.” Ganesha will say, “I want milk.” Therefore, Shiva represents the state of asceticism and that is the culmination point of modern culture. Why are people from the West eager to accept, appreciate and follow spiritual life? Because they have experienced a life of luxury, prosperity and plenty, and so they are fulfilled. After attaining fulfilment in life, the Shiva syndrome becomes operative.

Now the Ganesha syndrome is operating. Everyone wants to wear good clothes, eat good food and live a comfortable life, like Lord Ganesha. Today you can travel anywhere in the world. Nobody travels with a cloth bag, they carry suitcases. Nobody wants to live like Lord Shiva. Nobody sleeps in their underwear, they sleep in a nightgown. The Ganesha syndrome is the *samskara* of modern times. When Ganesha drank milk it was a way of telling people, “Don’t worry, I am coming.” The first news about Ganesha drinking milk

was announced from a village near Bhatinda in Punjab. The voice was first heard in that village from the statue of Lord Ganesha, who said to a villager, "I want to drink milk." This event started there and it did not happen in India alone, it was a global event.

You are well aware of the concept of God as Father. Now you need to develop the concept of God as Mother, because in the future our society is going to be ruled by women. Of course, they have always ruled us, but from every point of view the future is Ganesha and Devi. Kali Yuga, the age in which we are now, belongs to Ganesha and Devi. *Kalau Chandi Vinayakau* is the mantra which tells us about the future. You can see the Ganesha syndrome and the Chandi syndrome with your own eyes. Everyone wants to live well, to have a proper education, a good house, nice things. That is the Ganesha syndrome. Girls want to look beautiful, to wear cosmetics, lipstick, jewellery and dress in the highest fashion. That is the Chandi syndrome. When you worship Chandi, you give her sindoor, scent, jewellery, cosmetics and beautiful clothes. Prasad is offered every day, kheer, halwa and all types of good food. This is the tradition which we are now entering. The West has already been inflicted with the Chandi and Ganesha syndrome. Now it is the turn of India, and that is why Ganesha started drinking milk.

Bring the child to India

Why did Ganesha drink milk? He was saying, "I am coming. I am coming." The incarnation of Divine Shakti on the earthly plane has already arrived. Divine Shakti has already incarnated and is either in the womb of a mother or outside the womb. The Divine Shakti will not be born in an affluent place. He will be born in the house of the poor. He will come where there is sorrow, misery, pain and struggle, he will come crying. History tells us that Christ was born in a manger, Krishna was born in a prison, and Moses was born amongst the slaves of an Egyptian pharaoh. You can search everywhere for this incarnation of the Divine, but he will be

born in the house of the poor. In this age the incarnation of God will take place in very humble circumstances, as it has done before. The birth can take place anywhere in the world, not necessarily in India, but only if the child is born in India will he survive. Otherwise he will be crucified, because elsewhere saints have always been crucified, and later the scientists will be.

Therefore, if any of you bears a child with extraordinary qualities, bring him to India and I will look after him. In Indian culture the people accept saintly qualities. A saint or a sadhu is respected in this society; even if he is born with a few lapses, we don't mind. Pandit Jasraj, whom you have just heard singing, is a guru of music, so we only see his music and we overlook anything else in him. I am a sadhu, so the devotees only see what they expect of me. They don't notice whether Swamiji smokes or not. In Indian culture the quality of a person is appreciated. So, any time, anywhere, in any part of the world, if any child with extraordinary behaviour is born, don't announce it, but bring him to India. Indians will respect him, because here we know the truth, that the world survives on saintly personalities and on goodness.

In India, we condone the lapses of saints and sages, but the West will not condone them. They want a perfect God. Of course, God is perfect, but when He is born in a human body, there are certain lapses. When divinity manifests in a human body, subject to the three gunas, to the limited processes of nature, then he will be born, he will cry, he will love, he will get angry, just as Christ got angry and cursed a fig tree. But in India we overlook these discrepancies. So, if you know of any such child, who is born in Europe, America or Australia, bring him to me. It is not necessary that such an incarnation of God will take birth in India, although when Christ was born, the wise men in India came to know about it directly. The four wise men brought him gifts because the birth of Christ was a global event. It was not just confined to Israel, it was global, and Christianity has become a global religion.

The event of Ganesha drinking milk has to be understood in that perspective. So when such a child is born bring him here. The signs of the Lord's powers are altogether different from ordinary signs. Talent is not the indication of God. God is not born with talent, but with special qualities. You will find talent in many people these days. Some children are very sharp at the age of eight and you can call them geniuses. You find many geniuses today, but God is not a genius. He has *vibhootis*, special qualities. The Lord has said in the *Gita*: "The vibhooti holder is born out of a fraction of my own energy." So if you have any such child in Europe or anywhere else, don't take a risk. Bring him here.

Advice to the Young

The age of pens and notebooks is finished. This is the age of computers; there is no question about it. Through satellites the computer makes contact possible anywhere, even in outer space. Whichever job or work you are doing now is not an end in itself. Further possibilities to grow and develop always exist. Additional research and improvements can be made in any field. South India is far ahead of North India in terms of mechanization and computer software development. It has made great progress, not only in the applied sciences, but also in the fundamental sciences. They have large, well-managed industrial setups there. The people are better educated, literacy rates are very high and the political situation is also better. Here, in the North, people produce a lot of children and don't care about the size of families, but there the population is well-controlled.

There are many possibilities for development, but proper training should be given right from the beginning. The culture of the future will be a computer culture. Computers will play an important role in every sphere, so learn as much as you can, especially the practical aspects. Now you do not need to recite the mathematical tables. We used to remember the tables on our fingertips, but you don't need all that anymore. You can do everything on a calculator. People who are not familiar with calculators exclaimed in the beginning,

“Oh, what a brain this little thing has!” It speeds up the work and makes it even more efficient. The greatest achievement of the twentieth century is the computer.

The movie ‘2001: A Space Odyssey’ showed how a computer lost its temper because it was jealous. The computer had an emotion! A machine doesn’t have emotions, but this computer did. Even a computer can fall sick, just like you catch a virus or wood gets termites. In the same way, a computer catches a disease and it spreads from one computer to the next. Treatments are now being found for these diseases. When we keep computers we have to employ antivirus techniques. When the computer falls sick we screen it with antivirus filters which diagnose the disease.

Your head thinks about many things such as earning, cooking, washing, but machines do all that now. You just give the machines an order as you would a servant. If you put your clothes into a washing machine, it will wash them with soap, then rinse and dry them. Just put your plates in the dishwasher after your meal and it will wash them, dry them and keep them in place. The microwave oven can even cook; you just put the food in and take it out after a few minutes ready to eat. In foreign countries women do not waste their time in the kitchen. They put a chicken in the microwave, take it out cooked fifteen minutes later, have it with coffee, and walk out the front door.

These days computer programmers and engineers are in great demand. All the computer programming and repair work is done by them. In Vienna I met a young American couple and gave them the spiritual names of Vashishtha and Arundhati. He was a computer programmer and a Sanskrit scholar. When he came to meet me, the first question he asked was from Chatushpadi, a Sanskrit text which most people have never heard of. Many Indians do not know of this text, but he was familiar with it. Chatushpadi was written here in Bihar by a great brahmin scholar, Vachaspati Mishra, who was a resident of Mithila. His wife was named Bhamati. Vachaspati was a very great Sanskrit scholar who was always

engaged in his studies. Bhamati was a simple housewife and, like any other, she longed to have a child. When she became desperate, she requested her husband, “Everybody comments that I do not have a child. Please give me one.” Vachaspati Mishra said, “If I give you a son born of flesh and blood, there is no guarantee that he will bring a good name to our family line. So, I will give you a son born of mind that humanity will remember for ages to come.” At that time he was writing a commentary on the Brahma Sutras, so he said, “This composition will be named after you.” Thereafter, that commentary was known as Bhamati Tika, which is also called Chatushpadi, meaning composed of four verses.

Vashishtha came to see me in Vienna to ask about Chatushpadi. I explained it to him and afterwards he wrote his own commentary on the four sutras known as Bhamati Tika. We became great friends and used to discuss many philosophical topics. I found in him someone of a higher calibre whom I could talk to. Vashishtha used to program space shuttles and satellites. He was offered jobs by various companies to program their satellites. After one contract he would be called by another company in some other country, and he would go there. Wherever he went, he carried his library and computer along with him. He knew everything about the Vedic religion, Shaivism and Vaishnavism, but he never visited India. He said, “I have no time. You come here, so my questions get answered.”

Progress or marriage

When you study a branch of knowledge, you should do so with an aim and you should gain something from that aim. Earning money is necessary, but the boys and girls of today’s generation should think well before sacrificing themselves on the altar of married life. I am saying this very emphatically, because educated boys and girls who want to pursue a career must keep their thoughts under tight control for a couple of years. Today, in our society, on the one hand, all the means of enjoyment and indulgence are readily available, and on

the other, so are the opportunities for learning, training and progress. Society can even offer the prospects of space travel. So today's generation has to make the correct choice. You can get married anytime, in the next life as well, but this life should be utilized properly.

Therefore you must have the attitude that progress in life is on one side, and marriage, family and children are on the other. This path of evolving in life is not for all. Those who are weak have no other option, so they are tied into a knot with a partner. But those who are strong, who have the available means, should think carefully before committing themselves. They should tie their knots with themselves, with their own lives. It is the duty of every mother to tell her daughters this and give them their freedom. If the girls want to study, progress and earn their living, then their mothers should not force them into marriage.

When I wanted to leave home, all the relatives said, "What will you gain by leaving home? You want to find God, but you can do that at home." I said, "Show me one or two fellows who have found God at home, then I will not have to leave." I did not see even one such example, instead I saw good people, good devotees, crushed in the mill of household responsibilities. In my home my father used to say, "You should not follow this path. What can I do now? I have children, I have commitments. I cannot leave, I have to stay. I cannot take sannyasa now. Sannyasa is for moulding. When the bamboo stick is still thin, green and flexible, it can be moulded to any shape, but any attempt to bend a dry, hard stick will break it. Now you are at a tender age and you can still be moulded."

In the same way, marriage is not a necessity of life, it is a weakness of mankind. Man finds a support to cover his weakness. Why not overcome this weakness in the first place? There are many people who are addicted to their weaknesses. When a drunkard stops drinking, he falls sick. Many come to me saying, "When I don't drink, my stomach gets upset, I get diarrhoea, my head begins to reel. There is

headache and nausea all the time, but when I have a drink I feel better.” Alcohol is their weakness. So why don’t you get over your weakness? You come from an educated family and, therefore, you should see that your education leads you to the highest pinnacle. Maybe you should go out of the country and widen your perspective. Then you will see that there is an alternative to marriage, that marriage is not the ultimate aim of life, and then you will think twice about getting married.

Solution to the marriage problem

Today is the age of computers. In foreign countries the computer is the basis of their culture. It has invaded their society and their homes. Even the window screens are opened by computer. The computer is programmed for a particular time and when the sun rises the window screen open automatically. So, if you can, get out of the rut. You can get a scholarship, earn and learn, but if you get married you will get stuck. Then you will have two husbands, one a computer and the other the one whom you married. It is not good to live with two husbands. As far as desire is concerned, the best way to control it is spiritual sadhana. There are particular practices for this purpose. If your parents pressure you, tell them sternly, “No. I do not want marriage now.”

Swami Vivekananda did not marry. Ramakrishna refused to have marital relations. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu did not marry. There are many people in the world who do not marry. Why don’t they marry? Because they have a desire to advance in life. They want to grow and evolve. There should be no hurdles in their way, no obstacles and no breakdowns. Married life is a great obstacle in life, and I don’t mind whether you approve or disapprove of this statement. Marriage is a great weakness for which society has never tried to find a solution.

The solution and treatment of this problem is spiritual life. Spiritual life does not mean going to the temple of Baidyanath Dham to pour water on the lingam. Spiritual life means making an effort to take the mind inward. Learn

how to worship, how to do asana, pranayama and mantra japa, and practise daily for one or one and a half hours every morning. You have seen thousands of people who do this in the world. You have visited the ashram and seen people learning and practising there. People who practise yoga regularly do not have any problems. Ask any one of them. They are all happy because they have a direction in life. Some want to live the life of a sannyasin, others want to live the life of a scientist or philosopher, others want to earn money and become millionaires.

There is no harm in being a millionaire. Wealth is also a form of the goddess Lakshmi. If you have the blessings of Lakshmi, you can become a millionaire or a billionaire. I have definitely received the blessings of Lakshmi in my life. Maybe I wear a loin cloth, but I am a billionaire nevertheless. Each of my ashrams is worth millions. Wisdom is Saraswati, wealth is Lakshmi and power is Durga. These goddesses must be worshipped. The desire to earn money is constructive, but the desire to acquire things out of greed and to spend the money on heavy drinking and self-indulgence is destructive. We do not use money properly, for the right purpose; we use it for selfish reasons. All the rich people have spoiled their children. The positive samskaras of their children have been destroyed completely. This means that the form of Lakshmi has been distorted.

Swami Niranjan knows a lot about computers. In our ashram all the work is done on computers. The books we print are put straight onto the computer. The computer should become the basis of satsang. It is a good thing if your mind becomes oriented to computers. It is better to have a computer-oriented vritti than an object-oriented vritti. Let the mind become engrossed wherever it goes. Just like salt becomes one with water, and sugar become one with milk when dissolved in it, in the same way, let the mind dissolve wherever it goes. As far as the question of enjoying the pleasures of the world, marriage, children and family is concerned, leave it for the next life.

Stripping of Nature

Science also has a negative aspect. In the next forty or fifty years it may also create certain hazards. Scientists are trying to reveal the mysteries of Nature, to strip her naked. They are removing her clothing, skirt by skirt, right down to her underwear. Just as Dushasana tried to strip Draupadi in the *Mahabharata*, in the same way, the scientists are trying to strip Nature. They have not yet been successful, because the moment they remove a skirt, another one appears. Just as when Dushasana removed one sari, another one appeared underneath, and so he was unsuccessful, scientists too have not been successful.

Here, Draupadi represents Nature. The five husbands of Draupadi represent the five senses. Nature too has five qualities, five senses, five *tanmatras* of speech, touch, vision, taste and smell. So the five senses are five husbands who have lost themselves in gambling. Today we too have bowed down our heads to science. We have to respect science, so we have lost the game of gambling. The five husbands are quiet and the scientists continue stripping Nature. During this process something is going to explode at some point, but nobody knows when.

Science has this negative aspect. At any point of scientific discovery, a great commercial or global disaster can take place, because Nature has her own secrets. Scientists have only understood some of her secrets, which they are applying in their scientific experiments. Similarly, Nature has many more secrets, she is full of secrets. If all the secrets of Nature could be revealed, then what would happen?

Companionship not dependence

Marriage is not for strong people. Marriage is not the path for those who wish to pursue something higher in the spiritual field or in any other endeavour. Of course, if you can adjust to marriage in such a way that it becomes companionship, it is alright. However, in most marriages, the relationship develops along the lines of dependence and

slavery. You depend on me and I depend on you, you are committed to me and I am committed to you, you are tied to me and I am tied to you. Marriage should be a bond of friendship, not of dependence.

If two friends, a boy and a girl, want to live together like husband and wife, that's fine. However, this system where you are my liability and I am yours, I dance on your head and you dance on mine, is not good. If two people spend their lives together like friends, then marriage can be a productive relationship and the husband and wife can live together and work together. When he goes to the office, she works on other things. In the evening when they both come home, they can sit down and have dinner, then read for some time, listen to music and sing some kirtans and bhajans together.

However, instead of living together like friends, many married couples try to control one another. The husband says to his wife, "You should not go out. You should not work in films. You should not sing. You should not talk to that person. You should not wear clothes which expose your body." The wife goes on nagging her husband, "Who was that girl? What were you saying to her? What is your relationship with her?" All this is no good. No wife or husband should have such rights over the other. This is why the marital system has not worked. If it does not work then we should throw it out and bring in a new system, so that we can all live life peacefully.

Mentally conceived children

After marriage come children. When a child is born to you, call it your disciple. I have many disciples whom I consider to be my children. Swami Niranjan and Swami Satsangi can be considered as my son and daughter, but they do not dance on my head. These children do not demand any rights, and if I die tomorrow I won't have to leave them any inheritance. They won't get any money out of me at all, because I am a vagabond and I will die a vagabond. When I die, what will Swami Niranjan get out of me? Just one loincloth! These

are my disciples, my mentally conceived children, just as Vashishtha was the mentally conceived son of Lord Brahma.

One type of child is conceived in the womb and the other in the soul. Christ was a mentally conceived son and that is why he is said to be immaculate. A mentally conceived son is one who is born without the union of fluids from the male and female body. Christ was born from Mary, not through her union with Joseph. Such a son is a mentally conceived but the child born through physical union is not. So these are my *manas putre*, my mentally conceived children.

Swamiji, what is the importance of conducting death ceremonies and rituals? Do they affect the afterlife and rebirth of the soul that has passed away?

As far as the conducting of death ceremonies and rituals is concerned, people go on doing it. What will anyone do for my death rituals? My karmas will conduct death rituals for me. If you depart without doing any good karma and your son does rituals thereafter, how is it going to liberate you? For example, you can deliver good food to your son in prison, but this cannot reform him or free him from the sentence which has been passed. Similarly, when you die, only your karmas are carried along with you. The karmas that you earn in this world today will be carried along with you. The benefits from donations made at the time of death rituals are confined to the pandits and clergymen. In that way rituals are good, at least someone benefits. But the idea that if you don't have a son you won't be despatched properly after death should be forsaken. People should try and free themselves from such beliefs.

Commitment to God

When you say prayers for the fulfilment of a wish you must not ask, “Should I wish for this or not?” It is only on the basis of faith that prayers are made. So why ask the question? It is better to keep quiet. You should not speak about your wish to anyone before, during or after making a resolve. It is a seed, a *sankalpa*, a resolve, arising from the mind. If you sow that seed and dig it up again and again in order to look at it, then the potential for growth is lost. Bury the seed in the soil of your mind and then forget about it totally.

A wish and a pledge

Many years ago I made a wish in Trayambakeshwar. At that time there were many great scholars, swamis and charismatic people. I didn’t think that I would be able to do anything with my life so I made a wish there. It was a humble request after which I also made a pledge, and then I forgot both the request and the pledge. I sowed that seed so deep that I forgot it. Later, the wish which I had made there was fulfilled one hundred percent. Knowledge of the vedic culture moved through foreign countries like a bulldozer.

That wish was only effective for a span of twenty years. After making the wish I had pledged that within twenty years my work would be completed, and then I would leave

everything and surrender myself to Him. But I totally forgot about this commitment. My work was completed in twenty years. I was supposed to leave the ashram in 1983, but I did not do so because I had forgotten my pledge completely. Gradually, wherever I went for programs, I began to have the acute feeling that the lectures I was giving were useless. I now realize that God was responsible for that change in me. He is responsible for everything, everywhere.

I am not a person to complain. I follow this principle in life: to share my joys with others but to suffer alone. Then one day I happened to be in Bombay. All at once I had the feeling that as Trayambakeshwar was nearby, I should go there for *darshan*, because my *ishta devata* is Lord Mrityunjaya and the *vyotirlingam* was at Trayambakeshwar. I instructed Swami Satsangi to hire a taxi and we drove there. The moment I bowed down in front of the temple precincts I immediately remembered my commitment, because it was there that I had made it. I suddenly realized my mistake. I had asked Him to do things for me and in return I had pledged that I would leave everything. He had done the work for me and the moment my forehead touched the ground in front of Him, I immediately remembered everything.

I must have remained in that state for a minute or two. As I realized my mistake, I was thinking, not praying: Now I have to leave Munger; I must leave everything. So, I returned to Bombay by car, then caught a plane to Munger. I immediately telephoned Swami Niranjan, who was in New York at that time, and told him to leave everything and return to Munger. He returned, took charge and did everything after that.

Law of karma

So, prayer for the fulfilment of a wish is a very powerful thing if it is done properly. It has its own laws. Whatever you do does not concern your parents, partner, or children; it is yours and concerns you alone. Whatever you want to do, you do by your own wish. You do not ask about it. If this wish is made properly then it is like a bombshell. However,

when you make a wish you must also pledge to renounce something. If a lady wishes for a child, she has to pledge something in return which is equivalent to the child. God made me victorious globally and I pledged to return that.

Praying for the fulfilment of a wish is not a simple matter. It has a very deep relationship with God. In your mind there is sorrow and suffering; there is also desire and a few unfulfilled wishes. You wish to fulfil them all, but you must also give something in return because your destiny is fixed. If you take ten rupees out of your pocket, you must replace it with something. This is the law of karma. Everyone has to follow these laws, whether it be Rama, Krishna, Asha or Satyananda; nobody can erase them. Everyone is bound to suffer throughout their destiny. You can alter the *kriyaman karma*, that is, the actions not yet performed; you can even alter *sanchit karma*, the stored actions, but you cannot alter *prarabdha karma*, destined actions, by any ritual or *amushthana*. For them, you have to make an adjustment. A prayer for wish fulfilment is one such type of adjustment.

I was destined to live like a beggar, so I lived like one despite having such large ashrams and so many luxuries. Ultimately, I have gained nothing other than these two loincloths. If I hadn't been prepared to accept these two pieces of cloth then I wouldn't even have them. When God has destined me to live like a beggar, then I will remain a beggar. If I want to live luxuriously, then I will have to renounce something. Therefore, such prayers are necessary. Nothing is impossible to attain in the kingdom of God, but God is a complicated element. You cannot handle Him easily. There is only one way to handle God: make a prayer and make a promise which even He does not know of. You and only you know that promise, not even I need to know.

Blessings of God

The relationship between you and God is very personal. My relationship with God is with Him alone. It is a direct relationship. It has nothing to do with my relationship

with friends, disciples and devotees. Two lovers meet only in solitude, where no one else is around. The street of love is too narrow to accommodate more than two people. The relationship with God is like the street of love; there is only you and Him. Your mother, father, children, husband, in-laws, none of them come into the picture. The relationship between you and God is absolutely private. The love between Radha and Krishna was like that of the individual soul and the cosmic soul, like Prakriti and Purusha. The relationship between two lovers is unique, nobody else can come in between. It is something from inside which is very secret, so don't even talk about it.

Even if somebody digs and asks, don't say anything, because the feelings of love will work in equal proportion to the secrecy you maintain. The more hidden the seed is, the stronger the plant will be. If you dig daily to look at the seed, then it will lose its power. I had totally forgotten that I had made promises to God. I was totally blissful in my fame and success. I didn't even remember that I had promised Him anything. I had forgotten the promise despite receiving so much from Him! There was never a single obstacle in the development of my mission. When I travelled abroad, people came from all over Europe to listen to me. All the hotels of entire towns were booked out. People were so enthusiastic that Swamiji was coming. Even the Pope and bishops heard me. This was because whoever is blessed by God is a king in himself.

So, nothing is difficult for one who is blessed by God, but He is a complex element. It is not so easy to pull Him by ropes or to pin him down. You must pledge some act of renunciation, and you don't have to ask anybody about it; you have to decide it for yourself. Don't consult your mother and father. You give something to God and you take something from Him. God knows how to give and how to take as well. So, you will only receive what you are destined to. I was given whatever was in my destiny. But no one can stop you from praying. Go ahead.

Manifest Form of God

The question is not whether God is *sakara* or *nirakara*, but whether He assumes a form of His own or whether every form is His form. Isn't His form the universal manifestation, everything that you perceive? Is God only transcendent or is He immanent? God is immanent as well as transcendent. When you say transcendent, it means *nirakara*, without form. When you say immanent, it means *sakara*, with form. Even if you say that God has no form, I still need a form. The point is very simple. I require a form and, therefore, it is my need. I must have a form of God for myself towards which I feel intense attraction. This is the meaning of the term *ishta devata*. The word *ishta* means 'I like it' and *devata* means 'divine form'. So, *ishta devata* means that divine form which I like.

I like Christ, I like Krishna, I like Rama. Some people like Krishna because he was a mischievous chap, always playing and troubling others. He used to create trouble for his mother and for the community. Rama, on the other hand, was very cultured and some people like that aspect. For others, the *ishta devata* can be the form of Kali, Durga, Devi or Mary. You may choose whatever aspect you like, but the form has to be there. Even the cross is a form of God, not because Christ was crucified on it, but because it represents your inner, psychic body: *ajna chakra*, *ida*, *pingala* and

sushumna. So, the cross is a good form to meditate on. If you concentrate on the cross, it does not make you a Christian; it makes you a sadhaka and it helps you in your sadhana.

Ultimate form of God

The mind is power, but right now it is in a state of dissipation. The sunlight illuminates everything that it falls on. That same sunlight, if concentrated through a magnifying glass, can even burn. Similarly, the dissipated mind has to be channelled, concentrated and brought into focus, then it becomes powerful. So, the discussion on whether God has a form or not is meaningless. As long as your mind is in a dissipated state it needs the form. However, when you have concentrated your mind and entered the state of *savikalpa* and *nirvikalpa samadhi*, where the mind is totally one-pointed and all dualities cease to exist, then you can transcend the form. You start with the form and, when it is no longer required, you transcend it.

I must also add that the *Ramayana* doesn't accept this view, nor does the Srimad Bhagavata or the entire gamut of vedic religion. In these texts it is said that the ultimate form of God has form. Think about it; you do not have to believe what I say. If the ultimate form of God is a form, then what is that form? Vaishvanas say that it is Vishnu or *Narayana*. The Shaktas say it is Devi or Goddess. Shaivites say it is Shiva. This means that God has a form and He also has innumerable or endless forms. We need not debate this point. The *Ramayana* has talked about this from beginning to end. It says that Rama incarnated, and that the form of Rama is the same as the ultimate form.

So, don't be confused or get into strife thinking about whether God has a form or is formless. Only consider whether you will be fulfilled by seeing Him with or without form. If you are fulfilled by the formless divinity, that is perfectly alright, or if you prefer to see His form, that too is okay. The scriptures have said, "Alakh Niranjan". The word *alakh* means 'that which can't be seen' and *niranjan*

means 'one without second', 'untainted'. However, you need a form in order to focus your broken and dissipated mind. If you don't want to see God in a human form, then you may seek Him in various other forms. Divine power has also been revealed in the form of mantra, yantra and mandala. In this yajna the form or *vigraha* of Devi is a mandala and in the periphery there are yantric forms. Yantra, mantra and mandala, are psychic forms. As such they are known as *yantrakara*, *mantrakara* and *mandalakara*. Divinity is represented in the form of yantra, mantra and mandala.

Living God

If your mind fixes itself on a human form of God, it is very good because this is an important aspect of bhakti. How can you feel God unless you consider Him to be close to you? Your God does not eat, sleep or talk. If you want to love God, you must have a concept. He is a living God and a living God eats. Let us say that you have a child who does not eat or talk. What kind of child is he? My child eats and this is a particular concept. For instance, my Ganeshaji in Ganesha Kutir changes his dress four times a year. In winter he wears a warm dress. In the month of June and July, I will take off all his warm clothes because he'll be feeling hot! You see, I have a special suitcase for Ganesha. Now he is feeling cold! Should I not be sensitive to that? If I am not sensitive enough when my God feels cold or suffers with cough, cold and fever, then there is no connection between Him and me. This is the concept.

The difference between you and God must go away. There is a great difference between myself and the formless, transcendental God. I can't reach Him, and if I can't reach Him, He can't reach me either! The unmanifest God is so far away that He can't reach me and I can't reach Him. There has to be a connection, a relationship with God, like your relationship with your family members. If my son can get sick, so can my God. Whether He gets sick or not, at least I can feel that He is sick. If you can believe that God sleeps

and eats and so His food should be prepared, then that is an indication of your sensitivity. Until you become this sensitive, His form does not materialize in you. It is for this reason that vedic dharma talks about seeing God in human form, such as Rama, Krishna, Vishnu, Shiva or Devi. These forms are used for meditation and are also loved and worshipped by the devotee.

Beauty of love

You have to clean your inner mirror. It is not necessary to have a pure heart to find God, nor is it necessary to follow *satya*, *ahimsa* or *brahmacharya*. But it is necessary to have pure feelings and sensitivity towards Him, even though you may be an idiot. You feed God, you put Him to bed, you call a doctor when He is sick. It means that you have become so sensitive that you can experience a living consciousness in an inanimate object. How can He manifest when this body, this creation is also inanimate. If you cannot visualize consciousness in matter, if you cannot awaken the consciousness, what can you do?

God will come in that form in which I think of Him. This is love. In love everything looks beautiful; even an ugly girl looks beautiful in the eyes of her lover. The lover says to his beloved, “There is no one like you in the world.”

A person who is deeply in love talks about his beloved as if she is the most beautiful in the world. That is the truth for him. For me, you could be the most ugly person, but for your lover you are everything. Such sensitivity arises out of love. The same love that takes the form of passion and desire takes the form of affection and devotion. The basic feeling for passion and devotion is the same. With the same steel, you can make a dagger to kill someone or a surgical knife to save someone’s life. In the same way, the basic emotion of passion and devotion is the same; it is one, not two. It is you who creates the difference, the distinction; sometimes you use that basic stuff as passion and desire, and sometimes as devotion and bhakti.

Jewel of Faith

*I*n *Ramacharitamanas* it is said that the servant of Rama, the servant of God, is greater than God Himself. Knowledge of God is one aspect and faith in God is another. Knowledge of God does not necessarily bring you closer or guarantee communion with Him, but faith in God does. Through knowledge alone you may or may not develop communion; it is never a certainty. Therefore, faith is the greatest asset. It is a valuable gem, like a rare diamond, pearl or ruby. The most precious and valuable jewel is faith. If you can attain this jewel then your path becomes clear. You will travel at the highest speed, like a racing car on the super highway with no traffic lights or crossings in your way. All the obstacles that arise on this journey will disappear and that is the highest path of bhakti.

You may say that God is my father or God is my mother, but the best relationship of all is: You are the master and I am the servant. That is our true relationship with Him. I am not God although the Bible says, “My Father and I are one”, and the Upanishads say, “Aham Brahmasmi”. But if you feel that this is true, why are you unhappy? Why do you cry? Why are you in ignorance? Why are you in avidya? Why are you subject to tamas, rajas and sattwa? Finally, as far as I am concerned my position today is – I am Thy servant and I shall carry out all Thy wishes.

You will discover that bhakti brings spontaneity into your life. Even if you do not want to love God, you will love Him. Even if you don't want to surrender, you will have to. Even if you don't want anything from Him, He will give you everything. Faith in God brings spontaneous blessings. You don't have to ask God for anything in a church, temple or prayer hall, because you are the servant. Your duty is not to ask, your duty is to serve. You are a servant so your duty is to act and not to ask. All disciples should live like servants, but they live like masters. They do what they want, not what I want, so there is no spontaneity of relationship. I have a spontaneous relationship with Swami Niranjan and I want to have this relationship with everyone. Similarly, God wants spontaneity in His relationship with us. When He gives you pain, accept it. When you are in pain you say it is due to a curse or to bad karma because you feel that only good things are the blessings of God. Pain is a curse as well as a blessing of God.

Faith in God is a glorious, wish-fulfilling jewel. If your heart is full of the valuable jewel of faith, then your mind and heart will always be radiant. Throughout the day and night there will be no darkness. This illumination does not depend on any lamp or candle. Even if you are poor, it doesn't matter. In fact, one who has faith is never poor, poverty never approaches. Remember that poverty has nothing to do with money. There are people without money who are very rich. There are very wealthy people who, in fact, are poor. That is real poverty. Poverty means ignorance, *avidya*. Faith dispels the overpowering gloom of ignorance like sunlight dispels the clouds. Vanity and ignorance automatically go away with the gem of faith. When faith and will develop, illumination arises from within, just as the sun rises and illumines the darkness.

Those of you who are Christian by background know what faith means. Faith is the basis of Christian dharma. I am teaching this not through the Bible, but through the *Ramayana*. Faith is the basis of spiritual life and the only thing you have to cultivate in life is faith. Even propensities

like lust, anger and greed will never approach if that gem resides in your heart. Poison is transformed into nectar and enemies become friends. Those who are suffering from mental afflictions will find that their pain disappears. He in whose heart abides the jewel of faith in God cannot have suffering, even in dreams. Those who strive for that jewel are the wisest of people.

Of course, this jewel is manifest in the world, but no one can find it without the grace of God. There are easy ways to attain it, but luckless souls contemptuously reject it. The scriptures are like holy mountains, and the stories related to God in any form are like many glorious mines. The saints are the expert mineralogists and penetrating intellect is their pickaxe, while spiritual wisdom and detachment from worldly affairs are their penetrating eyes. Any creature who searches for Him with love finds the jewel. Faith is itself the mine of every blessing, of every benediction.

I have in my heart this conviction: the servant of God is greater than God. God is the ocean, and the good and the steadfast are the rain clouds. We have to be the rain clouds in order to fulfil him. Hari or God is the sandal tree and the saints are the winds which carry the perfume from this end to that. Firm faith in God is the reward of all spiritual efforts. Whatever you practise, whether asana, pranayama, kundalini yoga, raja yoga or rebirthing, the reward has to be faith. But nobody has ever acquired this jewel of faith without the help of saints.

So, no matter what sadhana you do, ultimately, you have to come to a saint. Whosoever bears this in mind and communes with the good finds devotion to God an easy attainment. It is the saints who bring this wisdom to people. That is faith which defends itself with the shield of continence and slays the enemies of pride, ignorance and greed through knowledge, and wins the victory. Therefore, the ultimate of life, of all our ambitions, of all our convictions, should be faith, or *shraddha*.

Changing Social Codes

I have been asked over a thousand times to comment on the verse in *Ramacharitamanas* in which it is written that women and shudras need to be beaten. This verse comes at the end of Sundarakanda, when Lord Rama first prayed to the King of the ocean to give way. At that point it is said: “Drums, villagers, shudras, animals and women, all deserve beating.” It seems that this verse has been added later. Tulsidas could not have written this. My mind does not accept it. If you remove this verse, you will find that the verses above and below match exactly. When I removed this verse from the text and read it, I found absolute continuity. In the ancient texts, superfluous things have been added everywhere. There are many verses which are attributed to Kabir, but they were never written by him. Superfluous things exist in the Koran and in the Bible as well. I have seen a *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* of 450 verses and also one of 1,500 verses. This *Gita* of 700 verses which we read is said to be the only reliable *Gita*, but a *Gita* of 450 verses also exists.

This means that during the ages scriptures have passed through several hands, and during reproduction, verses have been lost or added. Therefore, it is the job of critics to find these discrepancies and superfluous modifications. In the *Ramayana* you can see the verses where shudras and brahmins are criticized, and where brahmins and shudras

are praised. These are clearly demarcated. It is very clear where brahmins deserve honour and where shudras deserve honour. The tribal king of the Nishadas was a shudra. Shabari also belonged to the same category. So this verse, “Drums, villagers, shudras, animals and women, all deserve beating”, looks out of place to me. When you read it again, delete this verse and you will find continuity.

Let me tell you one more thing which deserves to be understood. There is something called the code of justice which has always been a part of human existence, right from antiquity. The society of tribes also had a code of justice. Slowly, as they evolved, became civilized and changed their ways, so did their code of justice. It has existed in every age and culture until now. If there is a flaw somewhere in the codes of today, you won't find it now; it will become apparent after one or two hundred years. The question of humanity has always been a neglected issue in all codes of justice right from the beginning, whether the code belongs to Manu, Islam or any judicial court, and everyone acknowledges this today. These codes have been challenged by generations in the past as well as the present.

People have said that justice should be decided on the basis of the crime committed, not on the basis of caste. Today, many facilities and provisions are awarded on the basis of caste and we feel that this is justified. But what will people say after two hundred years? Then they will question why facilities and positions were awarded on the basis of caste. Does it come under the code of human rights? No, it does not, but codes are adjusted according to the times and circumstances. The judicial system is dependent on social concepts and political necessities. There are many people at present who have been deprived of education and no jobs are available for them. They are not sharp in their studies and they don't have any chance to move forward in life. Theirs is not an aggressive, active or mobile society, so we must provide some facilities for them. However, if this privilege were to be seen from the perspective of two

hundred years ago or four hundred years in the future, then it could be questionable.

Just as the code of Manu is questionable today, in the same way, any code of justice which developed for a society existing in a particular age is only relevant for that age. Justice is related to the values of right and wrong, existing in the social conditions of the time. Today, some things are considered to be justified and some things are unjustified as well. If you marry more than one partner at a time, it is unjustified today, but a few hundred years back it was fully justified. Kings used to have many wives. So justice and injustice are not eternal concepts; they are restricted to a particular time, because those are the accepted values according to the state of mental development of the people. First, the intellectuals, thinkers and social reformers of the day think, then they inform others and everybody accepts it. There are national dialogues and debates by which a point of conclusion is reached. Then the judiciary is told to change the laws.

Consider, for example, the issue of women. Here in India, women have always been neglected and designated to an inferior class. Whether in property documents, wills of succession or whatever, they have always been regarded as second grade. A man may do whatever he likes and nobody raises a finger. However, if a woman does anything, fingers are raised. If a man is widowed he can remarry, but a widowed woman cannot. This happens everywhere because society thinks like this. Until now, nobody has challenged or opposed this social code. Nobody has raised a question for centuries, but today it has become a big social issue. Can a woman leave home and make her own future independently? Can she decide about her education, her fortune and her destiny? Yes, she can.

What would happen if every parliament passed such a bill? Would all the courts issue judgements on that or not? All codes of conduct have a basis. On the same basis, Manu wrote down the code according to his social circumstances. It

was correct then, but today it may seem hopeless. You cannot think in those terms. How can you say that if a man of low caste does this, then punish him in this way, but if a man of high caste does the same then punish him in another way? In this age, it appears to us that Manu was crazy, because our beliefs, social codes and values have reached a different point after centuries of evolution, but in those times his code was justified. In Greece and some other countries, a widowed woman was put under lock and key. If she happened to meet a man secretly and was found out, then both of them were stoned to death in public. This may still be happening now, in the nineties! It was a common practice at the time of Jesus. Mary Magdalene was about to be stoned to death when Jesus saved her by saying, "Let he amongst you who is without sin cast the first stone."

So any code of justice is based on laws and regulations. These are made by the people of that age. The most powerful community, which is the most politically vocal, gets the law passed and that law becomes the basis on which all the courts give judgements, be it the Supreme Court, High Court or Lower Court. That is the law of today; it can't be the law of tomorrow. Tomorrow our consciousness will change, so we will raise a voice. There will be national debates and dialogues and the laws will change again. Then the laws of today will be outdated.

Recently a Nigerian writer and activist was executed. All the nations of the world raised a voice against it, because the code of justice today opposes punishment of death by hanging. Nobody has the right to hang another. Only He who has given life can take life. A man has no right to take the life of another man. No government has the right to execute anyone any more. Nobody has the right to kill another, except God and nature. The government does not have this right. This voice has been raised a number of times in many countries over the last few years. It is raised and suppressed, and each time it is raised again with a stronger force. However, the time will come when execution

is completely abolished around the world. After five hundred years people will ask, “Why did the government execute that man?” Historians will reply, “At that time it was the law, but it is not now.”

Therefore, the legally constituted judiciary must be dependent on political, institutional and social systems. It is not an eternal process; it can always be changed. The decisions of the Supreme Court which are made today will not apply for all times to come. They will not be accepted generation after generation. These things may change, but I say the same thing again and again. Crime, quarrels and wars all begin in the head; the rest is only an excuse. If you fight with someone, you say that he did this or that, but it is only an excuse. The root of all quarrels and fights, all sin and merit, is in the head. If the nuts and bolts of this chamber were tightened up, all wars would end. By sorting out the head, the whole world would get sorted out.

UNESCO was established in 1945. At that time the same idea was expressed which I am expressing now. The first hypothesis on which UNESCO was founded was that the seed of war, dissension and conflict exists in the human mind and, therefore, it is the human mind which has to be reformed. If you search for the root of all the quarrels between family members, husband and wife, father and son, brothers, friends, neighbours, you will find them in the mind. If this head of yours is sorted out, then the whole mess will be over. However, it is impossible to correct it, because it always remains sick. If everyone became a sadhu, that too would be a problem; everything in the world would be disturbed.

The Story of Rama

After thoroughly studying the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bible, the Koran and many other spiritual books which I have great respect for, I stopped my reading with *Ramacharitamanas*. This one book paved the way in my life. The greatest obstacle in my life was that I knew too much about God. I could think so much about Him, but He only remained within the precincts of my mind; I couldn't go beyond. This book took me out from the gravitational force of mind and intellect. This is the only book I read now. I don't read letters or newspapers. What is the use of reading them? They could not break the gravitational pull of my mind, but *Ramacharitamanas* took me out.

Ramacharitamanas is the story of Rama as narrated by Lord Shiva to Parvati. I had in mind to render it into English. Until now all the renderings of this book into English have been very poor because they are written by scholars, teachers and lecturers, and not by someone who can feel it. But I have not received the mandate yet. If I receive the mandate, I will carry it out. Of course, I have also given up writing. I don't hold a pen in my hand now but if I write a book at all by hand, as I have done in the past, it will be the literal translation of *Ramacharitamanas*. It will not need a commentary because the book itself is a commentary on faith.

Sakara concept of God

I have not seen a book like *Ramacharitamanas*. The *Bhagavad Gita* contains knowledge, but *Ramacharitamanas* has the sweetness of nectar. I am a man of that taste because my whole life has been dry. I have never experienced sweetness. I have always lived in solitude and quiet with no concern for anyone. I have my own way of eating and sleeping. So, *Ramacharitamanas* came into this dry life with the sweetness of nectar. Since childhood I have also had a good relationship with poetry and literature which I have studied in depth, whether it be Hindi, Sanskrit, English or any other. *Ramacharitamanas* complements that aspect of my nature, but the biggest contribution it has made in my life has been to establish a sakara concept of God.

Sakara is the one who has a shape, a form, and *nirakara* is the formless one. If God is formless, you can call Him nirakara, but how can you see the one who has no form? How can you ever see a formless entity and how can you name a nameless entity? How will you find the one who does not live anywhere? I don't want such a God. I want a God who has a name and a form, who has a home and an address. This makes things easy. Great yogis and saints can find Him, but I want an easy way to locate His address, so I have enshrined Him in Raghunath Kutir. Everyday I take care of that room. I meditate and worship Him daily and I can say truly that my God lives there. Why should I say that God is everywhere? Maybe He is, I don't deny it, but where will I manage to keep hold of Him?

Water exists everywhere, but you drink it from your own well. God is everywhere, but I have enshrined Lord Raghunath in my room and He is mine. This I learned from *Ramacharitamanas*. You have tried millions of ways to find Him, but where did you find Him? Where will you worship Him? Everybody is lost and confused. If you write a letter and address it to God, c/o- Everywhere, how will the postman find Him? To what address will your letter be delivered? He will just drop it somewhere, but if you write to God, c/o-

Raghunath Kutir, then He will receive your letter for sure. From *Ramacharitamanas* I learned that God is everywhere, but you have to hold Him at one place. The other thing I learned is that this light which you see comes from the Sun, but it is not the Sun. It has the warmth and brilliance of the Sun, but it is not the Sun. In the same way I may have a spark of divinity, but I am not the Divine. I may be a part of Him, but I cannot be Him.

Teachings about life

So, this verse which we were talking about was not written by Tulsidas. It does happen that people write to popularize their sect, but he did not write from this point of view. *Ramacharitamanas* is also called *Tulsi Ramayana*. It contains many kinds of verses in different metres which tell the story of Rama and Sita as it was narrated by Lord Shiva to goddess Parvati. Lord Shiva tells the entire story of Rama, Ravana and his brother, Kumbhakarna, who slept for six months of the year. The story of Rama is one thing and the war between Rama and Ravana is another. The story of *Ramacharitamanas* is the skeleton structure, over which the teachings are delicately woven. Just as while constructing a house, you erect a pillar of iron bars, then fill it with concrete, lay bricks and finally plaster it, in the same way, the story of Rama is only the skeleton.

The real instruction is the teachings about life. It contains lessons on the philosophy of life, lessons on relationships, be it love between brother and sister, between two brothers, or between father and son, how these relationships should be lived and how they get distorted. That is the speciality of *Ramacharitamanas*, otherwise there are many picture books of Rama's story and other versions like *Valmiki Ramayana*, *Ananda Ramayana* and *Vikat Ramayana*. These versions may have some differences in the stories, but the tradition remains unchanged. There was a time when the culture was spiritually oriented. The modern scientific culture of today is spreading all over the globe. Although we call it western culture, because it originated from the West, in reality it is a



Devi pooja



Audience at the program



Swami Satsangi with Swami Nirvanjan



Sri Swamiji

scientific culture. The previous cultures have been subdued everywhere, because mankind has become desirous of the comforts provided by scientific discoveries. However, there was a time when people were desirous of knowledge and righteousness.

Cultural influences

In every age the needs of man change. Today man needs telephones, cars and electricity. In that age people wanted liberation and they asked such questions as, “What is *Dvaita*, *Advaita* and *Vishistadvaita*?” They wanted to know what was written in the scriptures, what was said by Lord Buddha and so on. For that reason the *rishis*, *munis*, kings, merchants and warriors of this civilization spread their influence far and wide. The whole of South East Asia: Burma, Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand, Java and Sumatra, was influenced, and even today you find many archaeological remains there. At that time the story of Rama had reached those countries. The people there accepted the story and chose Rama, or Hanuman as their ishta devata. So, their concepts slowly became the same as ours.

Later on, there were vast upheavals in the states, empires, cultures and religions, as happens everywhere. During this chaos, the Indians could not maintain their influence. Just as the British could not maintain their empire, in the same way, Indians too could not keep their grip. So, at that time some things remained and a lot of things were lost. After that the story began to get distorted. Many new incidents were added and facts were changed. Somewhere, Sita became Rama’s sister, and many changes like that took place. Then, when the Greeks invaded India, a new philosophy took root, led by Buddhism and Jainism. In both these religions you find the influence of Greek philosophy. They are shadowed by the thinking patterns of Aristotle and Plato. The atheism of the Buddhists and Jains is inspired by Greek philosophy.

You can read in the archives and stories of Plutarch that when Alexander came to India, he wished to meet

the scholars. At Takshashila, he was introduced to Jain munis and he was even initiated by one. Alexander did not come to India with a military force alone; he also brought Greek philosophers with him. He came with commanders as well as philosophers because he wanted to talk with the Indian sages. The dialogues between Alexander, the Greek philosophers and the Indian philosophers are all recorded. You can read them in the archives. When he went from here, he took Kalyan Muni back with him. In the Greek language Kalyan became Kolynos. When Aristotle came to know that Alexander was greatly influenced by Kalyan Muni, he wrote a letter to him saying, “What are you doing? Instead of ruling over them you have become their disciple!” This letter is still preserved.

Distortions creep in

So, in this way, the culture spread from one place to another. The Jains wrote books on Rama, but many of those stories seem to be distortions because they do not conform to logical thought. In ancient times wars were ideological, more like philosophical arguments, based on *shastrartha*, philosophical debates. In this era, however, the pattern of events has changed, because things change from age to age. The wars of today are of a different kind. In every age the values change. So in those times, in order to subdue the tradition of Rama and put a black mark on Rama’s story, they distorted it and nobody objected. This is the weakness or the strength of our culture. They said, “What does it matter? Let them say whatever they want.”

Hindus are not reactionary. They do not react to criticism of their beliefs. Call it their weakness or their strength. Let them say Sita was Rama’s sister; she does not become that merely by their saying so. And even if she was his sister, what difference does that make? She existed in ancient times, not now. This controversy arises because there was a time in history when marriages took place in the same family. The people said, “Let the brother and sister get married, then all

the bother is over. Later, people said, “No, it is not right to marry into the same family. If you marry into other families, social interactions will grow.” Slowly, in the course of social development, different concepts grew and changed. So you can’t say with authority what happened in Rama’s time.

An advanced culture

Another point that you must remember is that Rama’s time was the *Treta Yuga*. In those days civilization was highly evolved. Moreover, the basis of our religion is the Vedas, just like the Koran is the basis of Muslim religion. There are actually three Vedas according to scriptures, but there are said to be four when they are chanted. When Rigveda is chanted, Samaveda emerges out of it. Then, to explain these four Vedas, many texts were written like *Grihya Sutras*, *Kalpa Sutras* and so on. They were called the ‘six shastras’. To explain them, the eighteen Puranas were written along with the stories of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. People may not understand them, but the Vedas are the basis of our religion and the entire culture follows them in one way or another. Whether it be idol worship, belief in rebirth or performance of rituals, these are all aspects of the vedic religion. Whether you wear the sacred thread, believe in idol worship, or consider the gods and goddesses as many but still one, this is all vedic religion.

The Vedas are written in verses with different chhanda or metres. These metres were named: *anustup*, *trishtup*, *gayatri*, *jagati* etc. An uncultured civilization cannot create such a literature in different metres. Thousands of years ago, at the time when the vedic literature was written, the civilization was not primitive. On the contrary it was highly developed. If the human race had remained in a primitive state until just a few centuries ago, man would not be able to write poetry now. In order to write poetry it is necessary to have a knowledge of language, script, metre and an organized way of presenting and expressing ideas. The civilization which produced such brains would have had to make alphabets and

then polish the script for thousands of years. They would have had to create the different metres, and to think, read, write and express many ideas. It must have taken thousands of years to accomplish all this. How could such a civilization think of marrying brothers and sisters? It is not possible to conceive of such an idea.

Dogs mate to produce pups. Those pups grow up and become mature in about two years, but the dog never mates with its own daughter. Although there are no social restrictions, still the dog avoids the daughter. He does not know that she is his daughter or wife, two pups do not understand the concept of being brother and sister, but still they do not unite. This doesn't happen in human society either, because social relationships are formed on the basis of natural relationships. What is that natural relation? It is smell, which is a mark of the DNA structure. The members of one family share a similar genetic formula. The mother and sister share the same formula which a dog can smell. Society labels this relation as brother and sister, but the dog identifies it by smell. If a dog cannot go against the natural identification marks, how can a human being do so? Man is more than an animal.

So this story about Rama and Sita was only a distortion of facts. A gentle person like Rama was so modest and self-conscious that if someone offered him good food, he would quietly refuse. Rama was not outspoken. Even with friends he was gentle and controlled. He used to think carefully before saying anything. This is a very great quality. He would never blabber out whatever came to his mind. He was not a fool. In *Ramacharitamanas*, Rama is mentioned as the king among the clever. He was so wise, yet still he had a nature of his own. You may be very clever, very understanding, and able to know other people's thoughts, but still you should be self-conscious. Self-conscious means that you think before you speak. Just like a tortoise pulls his limbs inside his shell and takes them out very carefully, in the same way, you must collect all your thoughts and express them carefully. In social

life a person who speaks with forethought is least likely to meet with an accident.

Vedic samksara

This is our culture and I am speaking of its greatness. Today the entire world acknowledges the fact that the community, the race, the civilization which created the Vedas, whenever it existed, was a very great civilization whose literature, grammar, poetry and thoughts were very highly evolved. As far as rituals and rites are concerned, all religions have them. Even in modern culture, when the mother conceives a child, the doctor conducts a checkup and then prescribes the proper diet and medicine. When the child is born, a scientific process is performed. A scientific rite definitely takes place, and religious rites take place as well among Christians, Muslims and Buddhists everywhere. However, let us say that you don't believe in religion. Can you deny the scientific event of childbirth?

When you name a child, you don't do it haphazardly; you think carefully beforehand. The child will bear the surname of his father. When the procedure is thought about and planned, then automatically it becomes a rite. Whether you perform that rite in consultation with a priest, with mantras, or plan it yourself, it doesn't matter. So this naming rite exists everywhere. The rite of marriage is also universal. The rites of renunciation exist in every tradition, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Jain, Vaishnava, Shakta or Shaiva; they are universal. The death rituals also exist universally. So, these sixteen rites which you call the vedic samskaras, exist throughout the entire human race. Whether you are a theist or an atheist, whether you believe in religion or not, even then these samskaras take place in some secular or religious form.

These rites are not only necessary, but they are also compulsory, they have to happen. If you are born, you will have to be addressed by some name, be it one, two, three, or A, B, C. You must have some mark of identification. Even

in animals the identification process exists. When one dog approaches another dog, he smells the mooladhara area and comes to know of his identity. A dog has his name tag in his anus. This is a surprising fact. Many scientists have been working on this. It also means that if there are two hundred cows in a herd, they are able to identify and know each other, and they can also identify their keepers and their enemies. If the cow knows what is good and what is bad, what is hot and what is cold, then won't she know which cow she is walking along with every day? So, if cows can identify each other, what is the basis of their knowledge and identification?

Three levels of intelligence

You identify someone by seeing a face or hearing a name, but how does the cow do it? Among dogs, cows, horses and other animals, the carnivorous or meat-eating animals have a very strong sense of smell, for example, the cheetah, tiger, lion, dog, wolf or wild cat. These are all carnivorous and their sense of smell is very sharp. It is relatively much sharper than that of herbivorous animals. Since the cow is a domestic, herbivorous animal, its sense of smell is limited, so it does not have as strong a sense of smell as a dog or a leopard. Secondly, the senses are developed for specific actions, for example, eyes for seeing, nose for smelling and so on. By your nose you cannot smell whether I am a sannyasi or a grihastha, a male or a female, but a dog can. However, by the five senses, you can identify five kinds of objects, and the master of the senses is the mind. The senses feed the information to the mind. The senses conduct the relevant information to the brain, whether it is black or white, what sound it makes and so on, and then the mind makes a decision.

That faculty is intelligence, so the cow has intelligence. In our scriptures it is mentioned that the cow has *buddhi*. We have read during our school days that the cow is an intelligent animal. What is it that is known as *buddhi*? When the material obtained by the senses is directed inside, it is

analyzed and clarified. Whatever I am telling you is going through your ears and you are registering, classifying, understanding and interpreting it. The entire process is happening within your brain. This process is called buddhi, which after classification and interpretation understands, and then accepts or rejects. Whatever I am saying may or may not be acceptable to you. You may appreciate or criticize it. Who does this? It is buddhi. This buddhi is developed in some animals, but there are many animals who do not have it, yet they still react correctly. They do not have intellect but their reactions are correct. That is called instinct, which is the name for a spontaneous drive.

So, we have three aspects before us now. In all beings there are three levels of intelligence. First is the level of instinct, second is the level of buddhi or intellect, and third is intuition. Intuition is an extraordinary quality. You must know the story of Isaac Newton. An apple fell from a tree, something clicked in him and he realized the theory of gravitation. Apples have fallen in front of your eyes many times, but this idea has never clicked in you because you do not have that quality which Newton had. Intuition is a higher quality of intellect which illuminates any subject on which it is focused, like a torchlight.

How did Archimedes make his observations? By watching the rising water level in the bathtub? You sit in the bathtub daily and the level of the water rises, but it never clicks! The power of intuition brings everything under a special kind of observation. So the most basic level is instinct. All of the 8,400,000 kinds of species are guided by instinct, which means they are automatically guided by nature. The speciality of humans is only that they are guided by buddhi, and some humans who are of a very high level are guided by intuition. You may call them great or *maha purushas*.

I offer my salutations

At a certain point in his evolution, man realized that the entire universe is permeated by Sita Ram, God and his

maya. I salute, I offer my prayers with folded hands, to everything in this universe. Because the entire reality, right from Brahman, the cosmic being, to the minutest creature, the entire reality is permeated by Him. Therefore, there is a very important chant in *Ramacharitamanas* which everyone knows: *Siya Rama Maya Saba Jaga Jane* – after having realized that the entire universe is permeated by God and his Maya, I offer my salutations with folded hands. *Mangala Bhavana Amangala Hari* – He is the storehouse of auspiciousness and the dispeller of inauspiciousness. The bestower of auspiciousness and eliminator of inauspiciousness is God's name.

Swamiji, can you shed some light on the actual political circumstances which prevailed at the time of Sita's swayamvara?

In the *Ramayana*, in the episode about Rama's marriage, you will find that Rama was not formally invited to the *swayamvara* of Sita because there were political disputes between Ayodhya and Mithila. Therefore, Vishwamitra quietly took Rama there with him, because he knew what the plan of destiny was. The king of Mithila did not send an official invitation to the king of Ayodhya, although he was the chief of the Federal Government of India at that time, just as the chief of the Indian Government lives in Delhi today. So, Dasharatha was the chief and Janaka was of a lower political rank, but despite that, considering the lineage, caste, relations and everything else, he did not send an invitation to Ayodhya. However, Vishwamitra took Rama to Mithila. When nobody else but the Prince of Ayodhya could lift the bow, and when he not only lifted it but shattered it to pieces, then there was no other option. Then the people of Mithila had to accept the victory of Rama and this may have hurt their egos a bit. The king of Mithila then had to send an invitation asking the marriage party of Rama to come and participate in the ceremonies. Mithila was forced to marry their daughter to Ayodhya.

Please explain the significance of the discussion between Garuda and Kakabhushundi in Ramacharitamanas?

In *Ramacharitamanas* there is a story about Garuda, the eagle bird. Garuda was in doubt about the nature of God, so he went to Brahma, the creator, then to Vishnu, the preserver, then to Shiva, the destroyer. Shiva told him, “Look, I don’t have time to answer your questions, I am very busy. Go to Kakabhushundi and he will dispel your doubts.” Garuda was directed to listen to the story of Rama from Kakabhushundi, who was a crow. The interesting point to note is that Garuda is the king of birds and the crow is a scavenger. This story is like the butler instructing the master or lord of the house. So, Kakabhushundi told Garuda the story of Rama.

It has been said that whenever the Lord takes birth, Kakabhushundi comes to observe the infant form of God. It is a very beautiful story. In reality *Ramacharitamanas* begins with this story. The satsang by Kakabhushundi is incomparable. He tells his whole life story and the story of his past lives. He used to sit with Sage Lomasha and discuss the manifest and the unmanifest. Kakabhushundi became a crow due to a curse. The point revolves on whether God has a form or not. Is God only abstract? Is God just formless? It means you are confining God to formlessness. After all, formlessness is also a limitation, a confinement. When you are able to describe God, then He is describable. If God is indescribable then whatever you describe Him as is just one aspect. God is formless and God has a form.

God's Name

This is not an alarm clock, it is my wake up clock. It is set to ring every morning at 2 am It wakes me up and the first thing I listen to is God's name. It is programmed to chant the name of God for forty minutes at a time. So I get up from my bed and sit down to sing, *Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram Patita Pavana Sitaram, Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram* for forty minutes. Then I get up, wash myself and start my japa. Oh God, when I sleep You should be the last one whom I shall remember, and when I wake up Your name should be the first thing that I hear. So I inaugurate and close the day with God's name. Anything which is begun well, ends well.

However, when you open your eyes in the morning, the first thing you see is this idiotic world. What is there to look at? You look at the world the whole day because you have to. But you should forget it, at least for forty minutes, and listen to the Lord's name. Start your day with the Lord's name. Don't be fearful of God. God won't be unhappy if you don't repeat His name. Even if you denounce Him, He won't punish you. You pray, not for God, but for yourself. Why take the Lord's name if you are afraid of Him? Even if you abuse God, He will still shower His grace upon you. God does not get angry at anyone, He does not punish anyone. When you chant His name, you do it for yourself.

You can also remove yourself from this worldly business for at least forty minutes and just listen to the Lord's name. Sugar is always sweet whether you put it in halwa or cake. In the same way, God's name is always sweet whether you sing or chant it. It has its quality of *madhuram*. There is a song: *Adharam Madhuram, Nayanam Madhuram*. He is sweetness personified. When you get out of bed in the morning with your eyes closed, half asleep, half awake, sing God's name. That is how the day should begin, with God's name: *Sri Ram Jai Ram*. This is a good start in the morning, then you can take a bath and read the Bible, *Ramayana*, *Srimad Bhagavatam*, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Bhakti Vedanta or Swami Sivananda.

Long-term investment

When you rise in the morning, firstly sit down and sing God's name. *Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram* is one example. However, you need not sing this, you can make up your own. Go on singing the Lord's name for thirty to forty minutes. When you repeat God's name you don't spend time, you gain time. It is a long-term investment. Repeat this process again when you go to bed at night. Even if you return late at night from a discotheque or a night club and you are a little drunk, it doesn't matter – that's a part of life. You can still sing God's name.

Chanting of the Lord's name does not mean that you run away from the world. In the balance of life there are four scales: *artha*, *kama*, *dharma* and *moksha*. These scales balance each other. If only *artha* and *kama* persist, then man becomes agitated. Therefore, *artha* and *kama* should be counterbalanced by *dharma* and *moksha*. In what proportion? You do not mix one kilogram of sugar with one kilogram of milk. In one kilogram of milk, you only put a few spoonfuls of sugar. The same is true for the proportion of salt that you put in vegetable dishes. Similarly, *dharma* and *moksha* make the dish of life tasty. Therefore, chant God's name for some time, perhaps forty minutes in twenty-

four hours. Forty minutes is hardly a fraction of one day, but it is enough to make the dish tasty, to make household life enjoyable.

You do not need to sing bhajans for eight to ten hours, just twenty minutes in the morning and twenty minutes at night. Then it doesn't matter what you eat. If you want to eat meat, eat it. If you want to drink wine, drink it. Whatever you want to do, you can. Even thieves and dacoits whose profession it is to plunder and loot should chant *Sri Ram Jaya Ram* for just ten minutes. This is the truth, because dacoits and criminals will always exist in the world. Even God cannot eliminate them, so what can the government do? No government can eliminate criminals; they have never succeeded in doing so. Crime is the oldest profession. Man first started to earn by thieving and looting, not by hard work. Crime is a reality. I am not asking you to commit crime. I am just saying that whatever you are, whether a prostitute, a dacoit or a saint, a female or a male, high caste or low caste, politician or executive, remember God's name.

When you get up in the morning, sit down and chant God's name for forty minutes. Do it loudly. What is there to hide? There should be no shame in singing the Lord's name. I do my pooja openly and regularly – every evening. At half past five I worship Ganesha, Hanuman, Rama, Shiva and Tulsi. People advise me to take a shortcut in doing pooja. I say why take a shortcut? Why should people be ashamed of worshipping the Lord? If people see me worshipping, they will also go back home and worship.

Spiritual journey of man

You should not relate spiritual life with daily life, nor should you have any complex about your nature, such as “Oh, I am not a good man.” Yes, you are not a good man, and I am also not a good man. You are a bad man eighty percent of the time and I am a bad man ten percent of the time, but a bad man I am. As long as you are in this human body, you can't be free from sins, from lapses, from the frailties of human

life, because you are subject to the dharma of the body. You are subject to the gunas: sattwa, rajas and tamas. Without the integration and permutation of sattwa, rajas and tamas, there is no creation. The total composition of creation is the three gunas. When fusion takes place between the three gunas, then creation comes into being, otherwise existence enters into *avyakta*, the unmanifest dimension.

Therefore, you have to accept the reality as it is and yourself as you are. So where do you start? If you start with morality, you will have psychological problems. Ask any psychologist and he will verify that. Goodness cannot be imposed or cultivated. Goodness is your inner being which is completely hidden, and you can only break through the shell with God's name. Although man has been born with a body, he is controlled by nature, or *Prakriti*, which has threefold qualities, *trigunatmika*. The body and mind each have their own dharma. So, thinking that I am a bad person is a worthless thought. The spiritual journey of a man does not begin with *satya*, *ahimsa* and *brahmacharya*; these are the culmination of human life.

The journey of man begins with faults, because man has accumulated karmas from the past eighty-four lakh yonis through which he has evolved. Craving, sleep, fear, sexual instincts are what you have inherited from the animal level of evolution. The human journey begins with an incomplete nature. Do you complete your MA or MSc and then begin primary school? When you start school, what do you know? You know nothing. Similarly, life begins with weaknesses, mistakes, incompleteness, impurities, desires, anger, greed, animosity, attraction and repulsion. You can't fight with these things and you can't go against them. You can't say, "From today I won't tell a single lie. I will be truthful." You can't say, "From today I won't go to a single woman." It is all hypocrisy.

Satyam, shivam, sundaram

Three things are your true form, your true nature: *satyam*, truth; *shivam*, auspiciousness; and *sundaram*, beauty. You

don't have to bring purity from outside, it is within you. You don't have to adopt any good quality from outside. You are already that. Therefore, the scriptures have said that these three – satyam, shivam, sundaram, represent your real nature, but are hidden. In order to manifest them, you have to break the outer shell. There is only one way to do this, no other method or way works. My model is 1923 and I have been trying all my life. I have tried every method and left it. I have tried to straighten the dog's tail so many times, but it always curls back again. Cut the tail and the stump is straight. I realized that I was trying to save the tail and also to make it straight. This is not possible. Either have a curled tail or cut it off. So, I cut off my tail.

Life begins with incompleteness. If you want to take your life towards completeness and perfection, then you should begin with the mantra of wholeness. The only mantra of wholeness and perfection is the Lord's name. So life starts with imperfection and this is natural. When you wish to move towards perfection, you don't have to take up a difficult method or path at the outset. You can try any method, but an important item in your life should be discipline. Just before you go to sleep and when you wake up, repeat God's name. You have seen my clock. It is not an alarm clock, I call it the Awakening Clock. This clock wakes you up with God's name, not an ear-piercing, nerve-shattering screech or tone. Keep such a clock with you. Set the alarm for yourself and at the right time the clock will sing kirtan.

God is One

Do not think of yourself as a devotee of Shiva, Rama, Krishna, Devi, Christ or Buddha. Sects are always different, but God is one. One father has ten sons and each son has a separate family and home. However, that does not make the father different in each family and home. In the same way, sects are many and different but God is the same. A variety of names does not mean that Rama, Vishnu, Krishna, Shiva or Shakti are different. By sect I am a Shaiva, but if I

worship Rama in Raghunath Kutir, do I become a Vaishnava? If I worship the Mother, do I become a Shakta? If I worship Jesus or Mother Mary, do I then become a Christian? These are sects and traditions, but bhakti is not limited to a sect.

There is no harm if Shiva kirtan is sung in a Vaishnava house, if Christian hymns are sung in a Hindu house or if Rama or Krishna kirtan is sung in a Christian house. Five star hotels keep a Bible in every room. Nowadays they have also started to keep the *Bhagavad Gita*. I used to read the Bible, Koran and *Gita*. What difference has this made to my personality? Whether one is Christian, Muslim or Hindu, what difference does it make? These are sects, and sects are not the personalities of anyone. Essentially, we are not Christians, Muslims, or Hindus. We are human beings, we are all one. There is no special anger called Christian anger, no special passion called Christian passion.

These are the ways, the paths, but basically we are all one. Imperfections are almost the same in everyone. The qualities of anger, greed, lust and passion are the same in each one of us, throughout the world, whether we are from the East, West, North or South. Similarly, the quality of goodness is the same in everyone. Fundamentally we are one and the same. So it doesn't matter what name we repeat, Sri Rama, Om Namah Shivayah, Hail Mary, Hail Jesus. Suppose you have come from a Christian background and I give you this clock. You say, "No, I don't want it because I am a Christian." This is a foolish idea. Many Indians intermarry with men and women from foreign countries, and many foreigners marry Indian men and women. Yet we don't see any difference in that, we see the difference only in God's name.

When we repeat the name, it will remind us of God. Name is only a reminder. *Sri Ram*, *Jaya Ram*, *Jai Jai Ram* is only a reminder. The idea which it invokes in us is that of divinity, and divinity has no form. Divinity is total, all comprehensive and universal. God's name reminds us of purity, divinity and greatness. We can take any name or read any scripture, whether it is the *Gita* by Prabhupad, the works

of Shankaracharya, the Upanishads, the Vedas, the Bible, the Koran, the Guru Granth Sahib, the couplets of Kabir, Meera or Raidas. They make no difference to our religious beliefs. I have found the taste of salt to be the same in Europe, India and China. I have found the same sweetness in the sugar of Russia, the UK and the USA. I have never found any difference in the taste anywhere. What I don't understand is how the difference in God's name cropped up in the first place. It must have been the work of mischief mongers.

Every form is God's form

Everybody says that God has no form, but the best way to depict Him is to say that every form is His form. It is easy to say that God is without form, because no one has seen His form. You are the witness of the things which you have seen, and you cannot be the witness of the things that you have not seen. How can you say that God is without form? Have you seen Him? No. Whatever you have seen, you are the witness of that. You have seen this universe which is the manifestation of God. Places of pilgrimage or *teerthasthanas* are the manifestations of God. Ganga and Yamuna are the manifestations of God. I am also a manifest form of God. There is a sloka which says:

*The entire manifest universe, including time and space,
Inside and outside, everywhere, is pervaded by God.
In water, on land, on the mountain peak, in flaming fire,
God is universal, pervading the entire creation.*

The entire universe is pervaded by one power. We call Him God, Hari, Rama, Allah, Khuda, Om or Amin. Just as it matters little whether we say soap or *sabun*, the name of God doesn't matter; it is the essence that is important.

Sing your way to Him

The scientists have said that there is energy within matter. We say that beyond energy there is consciousness, beyond consciousness there is the soul, and beyond the soul there is

divinity. In the *Bhagavad Gita* it is also said that behind the body are the senses, behind the senses is the mind, behind the mind is the intellect, behind the intellect is the soul and behind the soul is divinity. By behind, I mean its essence. In the same way, God is the essence of everything. The essence of milk is butter. The essence of butter is ghee. The essence of ghee is fat. The essence of fat is calories and the essence of calories is energy and heat, which is the basis of life. When the heat diminishes, we die. Similarly, the ultimate essence of matter is God, and matter is the manifestation of divinity. We are all the manifestation of divinity. The *panchatattwas*, five elements, are manifestations of divinity.

Therefore, just as sugar becomes one with milk, let the mind melt in God. There is no use controlling the mind, because there is no mind as such. Just sing His name until you get out! Just sing and sing the name of God until your mind melts. This was the path of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Meerabai. Narada continuously chanted Narayana, Narayana, twenty-four hours a day. If you sing the name of God with proper tune and pitch, rhythm and beat, you will enjoy it. Good food, sweets, tea, coffee, even brandy do not generate as much heat as the singing of God's name. There is a song:

*Now I enjoy the life of a wandering ascetic.
The happiness I get from singing the Lord's name
I did not find in all the richness of the earth.
We are the monarchs, the crownless monarchs.*

Three Disciplines

People need different kinds of discipline in different stages of life. Children need a discipline, young people need a discipline and even in old age one needs a discipline. There are three staffs, or *tridanda*, representing the three disciplines of the body, mind and soul. The first staff is the discipline of brahmacharya, or sexual control, which is necessary for any student engaged in studies. After that, in grihastha or household life, there is the discipline of the mind, maintaining proper control over food and sleep.

Even when one reaches old age, and retires or renounces everything, discipline is still necessary. But imposing brahmacharya on an elderly person is useless. Spiritual discipline is appropriate after middle age. The mind should always be focused on God. After retirement one doesn't stop working. At that time the work is to concentrate the mind on God and remain focused on Him. There should be nothing else. The mind should not be allowed to run here and there. This becomes the discipline of the soul.

Bodily discipline is necessary in youth. One should live the life of a brahmachari, without wasting sexual energy. Thoughts must be kept absolutely pure and directed towards learning the things which will be necessary in life. In grihastha ashrama, mental discipline is necessary because during married life many complications arise. The biggest

problem in married life is self-restraint. The foremost restraint for a householder is management of anxiety. The entire period of family life is full of anxiety. The farmer who owns land is anxious about the crop. A wife who is pregnant is anxious about the birth of her child.

Everybody has anxiety for one reason or another. The prices in the market are rising and inflation causes anxiety. Unemployment creates anxiety. Not getting a promotion causes anxiety. Getting transferred causes anxiety. If the daughter is not married there is anxiety. Whether the son turns out to be competent or a rascal, there is anxiety. So, anxiety is a universal truth in modern life and, therefore, psychologists refer to it as an anxiety neurotic lifestyle. Everybody has anxiety. If you start self-analysis from tomorrow, you will feel that this life is twenty-four hours a day suffering. Some suffer physically and some mentally. Some have a mind full of worries. This anxiety which affects the entire spectrum of life is the problem, and restraint of anxiety is the foremost duty of a householder.

So, the first discipline is physical restraint, keeping the sexual life healthy. If you misbehave with girls, thinking no one is watching, this is wrong. Self-restraint in sexual life is necessary. The race which does not value this restraint is bound to be annihilated one day. Many different kinds of diseases crop up unless there is physical restraint. The second discipline is restraint of anxiety. If you don't control anxiety, you will develop heart problems, diabetes, prostate cancer and many other diseases. Seventy-nine percent of all diseases are caused by anxiety. This means that out of one hundred diseases, seventy-nine originate from stress and tension. Stress causes suppression of the secretion of the hormone insulin, and when that happens, you will develop diabetes.

The third discipline comes after the age of fifty to fifty-five years, when you retire and practise *atma sanyam*, or self-moderation. There are two ways to practise this. One is worship, singing bhajans and satsang. The other is to join a spiritual organization and do social service. Institutions like

the Ramakrishna Mission and Bharat Sevashram do a lot of social work, so retired people can make themselves useful in this way. In this country there is a great need for social service organizations, and if they worked together, they could be even more powerful than the government.

Social service in the villages

In the villages, people do not have proper housing or even proper drinking water facilities. They have no other alternative but to live a life of deprivation. When a cow is in heat, by the time they reach Deoghar for insemination, it has already gone cold. Illiteracy is the biggest problem. Illiterate, uncultured people shit right in front of their own houses. People sit in rows to defecate in front of Vasukinath temple. It seems as if a large party is sitting for lunch!

There are many people in the villages who are blind, disabled, widowed, and need help. So after retirement, at the age of fifty years, you still have so much work to do that you won't even find time to die! Therefore, instead of retiring at the age of fifty-five or sixty, it would be better to take voluntary retirement at the age of fifty. Then you can run a social service institution along with ten to fifteen other people. Don't make the plan on paper only. Implement it and keep it active in the villages, not in the cities, because there are many facilities in towns and cities, but none in the villages.

You may say the cities also need social services. However, the cities have many facilities, like electricity, transport, roads, telephones, but there is nothing in the villages. If educated and resourceful people focus their minds on the villages, this will in turn help the cities indirectly because it will check population growth. When a good school opens in the village, there will be no need to send children to town to attend school. If there is a small health centre in the village, no one will need to go to the big cities for treatment. If there is a good barber, a good carpenter, a textile shop and a few other small shops in the village, then no one will go to the cities. The pressure building up in the cities will

automatically be reduced. Now, sixty to eighty percent of the urban population comes from the villages. If you can motivate these people to go back to the villages, then the cities will automatically become beautiful.

The people will go back to the villages only when they have facilities for education and health care. This can only happen when educated people who have some resources of their own go to the villages to do social service. Such people should never become a burden on the village. They should go to the villages, because it is necessary for people to return to a pure and natural way of life in order to find their roots and to discover their real nature. This is happening everywhere in all the developed countries such as America and Australia. Nobody stays in the cities on holidays and weekends. The roads are jammed with people travelling away from the cities to the villages where the air is unpolluted, the environment pure, the horizon wide and clear and the way of living relaxed and tension free.

I have discussed two types of self-moderation or spiritual discipline which can be undertaken in the later stage of life. The third is service to the motherland. Wherever your birthplace may be, no matter where your ancestors lived, whether in Katihar, Rikhia or Deoghar, collect all your resources and do service in that place. If you start serving in your own birthplace with a sincere heart and true feeling, the people of that place will definitely join in and help.

Selflessness, not selfishness

I came to Rikhia to retire and live quietly in solitude. I did not want to meet anyone, and even now I do not want to meet anyone. I realized that knowing the Self is necessary to keep oneself disciplined, without any craving for name and fame, or even for doing service and helping others. There is a difference between the feeling of service and the feeling of Self. The feeling of Self means *atmabhava*, the sentiment of others being like one's own Self. If I am hurt I feel pain, that is natural, but do I also feel pain if you are hurt? *Atmabhava*

means to feel the experience of others as my own experience. The sorrow and sufferings of others, the death of somebody unknown to me, the problems of families who are strangers to me, are all felt as my own.

This is atmabhava, not charity. Seeing everyone in oneself and oneself in everyone is the highest attainment of Vedanta: *Atmamani pashyanti bhutani*, which means seeing the Self in all and all in the Self as one Brahman. This has been written in the *Gita*, Upanishads and Vedas and the rishis and munis have said the same thing. The question is, how do you experience this feeling of self and Brahman, that Brahman which is eternal, constant, immortal, perfect and formless? This doesn't happen by speaking about it alone. If you identify yourself with the pain of another, the problem of that person becomes your problem. If your mother, sister, daughter or wife is suffering in the house during the night, then you won't be able to sleep. But when the member of another person's household suffers, you don't feel anything. This is not atmabhava, this is selfishness.

We are all selfish, not selfless, and the path to God proceeds from selflessness. Generosity doesn't proceed from selfishness. There is only one way traffic on this route. Whatever spiritual path we follow, it must be a path of selflessness, and this has been said in all the scriptures.

Spirit of Compassion

I want to live here alone in a hut, and when I leave I want to go away incognito. I came alone and I will go alone. No one will follow me. So I want to remain incognito and I hope God will fulfil my prayers. Visitors do not make me happy. There is no permanent friend in this world. If there were, then I would pray to God to keep me alive for hundreds of years so that my friend and I could live together. But there is nobody here who can give me that company. Either you go before me or I go before you, so how can we live together in this moving and perishable world?

Whose body is this? It is the body of Swami Satyananda. I have rented this body in order to share my spiritual nature. I am living in this body while I am alive, but I can leave this body also. You may know me as Swami Satyananda but, in fact, I may not be Swami Satyananda. For twenty years somebody else, a realized soul whom I had invoked, was occupying this body. When I was eighteen-years-old, I met a tantric yogini who taught me, amongst other things, the science of invocation, or *avahan*, which is part of the tantric system. She knew that it was necessary to teach me this science so that I could invoke this spirit in order to fulfil the order of my guru.

When and where I shall be born next is not a very important matter. I can always rent this body or let it out to someone else. Who is the owner of the body? The *atma* is the

owner. It enters the body to fulfil the karma, the desires, to live a life of passion and greed, or to live a spiritual life. The body and the atma are not the same, they are two different things, like the house and the householder or the house and the tenant. I am the owner, so I can always give this house to a tenant. As far as commitment to life is concerned, I am as young as a boy. I am not retired, I just live like this here because I like this kind of life. I don't need anyone or anything. What should I want?

Bodhisattwa

I have a choice to leave this body and migrate into the room of the spirit of compassion. Lord Buddha was born in different incarnations during his previous lives. He was born in the family of animals, thereby influencing the yonis, the incarnations to evolve. Without knowledge evolution is not possible, so in many of his past lives Buddha was born as a bull, then as an elephant, then as a snake. Why did he choose to be born as a bull when he was enlightened? Because he thought, If I am born in a family of bulls, then I will give knowledge to another bull, because a bull can only understand the language of a bull. An elephant does not understand my language and if I try to teach him *Gita* he won't understand it. However, if an elephant knows *Gita* and teaches it to other elephants, then it is possible for them to evolve.

In the same way, when I leave my body I will choose to be born from the womb of a mother who is of a very inferior caste. After being born in that family, I will teach dharma to my father and mother as well as the labourers and sweepers who live around me, so that they can also inculcate good samskaras. This phenomenon is called *bodhisattwa*. As a bodhisattwa, Lord Buddha took birth in many incarnations in the families of animals and low caste people. He also took birth in the houses of a businessman, a minister and a king, and everywhere he taught dharma. Sadhus and mahatmas should have this ideal. Everybody is prone to think, I will be born in a high caste family and my fame will spread.

Why should I think like them? Let me live with the poor, downtrodden, dirty and illiterate people. If I can live in a small hut, have a family and children, face the pleasures and pains of life and yet still live like a sadhu while moving in the cycle of worldliness, then that is something. Namdev lived like this and he became immortal.

Karma not caste

Nobody becomes high or low by being born in a high or low caste. It is not caste but karma, one's thoughts and deeds, that makes a person high or low. If you are born in a family of high caste but your karmas are of the lowest order, then how can you be considered as high? If you are born in the house of a sweeper who carries buckets of shit on his head everyday, but you have high thoughts, you will be considered as high. God will consider you high because a man rises by his thoughts. He who thinks high is high, he who thinks low is low. When I leave my body, I am going to be born to you village people, so that I can preach *Ramayana* and *Gita* to your mother and to my mother. I will teach all the villagers to think high.

Sadhus dream of living in a small hut; they don't desire to live in temples and ashrams. Villagers live in huts and sadhu-mahatmas also live in huts, but villagers are not sadhus because they cannot think like I do. If my thinking becomes your thinking, then all is bliss. Then these torn clothes that you are wearing will give you the same pleasure as nicely stitched clothing. If your head is right, your life is right, it is as simple as that. As far as the question of poverty is concerned, poverty exists everywhere in the world. This country may have material poverty, but poor people are everywhere, fools and cheats are everywhere, quarrels and fights are everywhere, not only here.

There is one thing you should all remember after leaving this body: if Swami Satyananda is born in your family as your son, then you will have problems. You may want a large home, lots of money and a life of comfort and luxury, but I

will say, “No mother, I will wear only a loincloth.” Then you will begin to think, “Why have I produced such a son who only wants to wear a loincloth?” I will teach *Gita*, *Ramayana* and *Srimad Bhagavatam*. I will also teach the way to live and the various skills required in life: how to raise cattle, cultivate the fields, grow sugarcane, keep a pass book and a fixed deposit. I will teach everything necessary for a better life. Therefore, pray to God for a son who brings both yoga and bhoga into your home. Yoga means high thinking, wisdom, divine thinking, and bhoga means prosperity, progeny, good food and comfort. Both are necessary for a full life.

Pilgrimage Sites

*I*n Kashmir there are many ancient pilgrimage places of a very high order. For Hindus there are several important Shiva temples, a Raghunath temple and a Gorakhnath temple. Jwala Mukhi is also a sacred shrine. For Muslims there is the renowned Hazrat Bal where the hair of Hazrat Mohammed is enshrined. These great establishments are visited by thousands of pilgrims from all parts of India. Initially, Hindus and Muslims went together to Hazrat Bal and other places of worship in Kashmir. Only now disputes are being created; before there were none.

Climbing down from Joshi Math towards Vishnu Ganga, on the route to Badrinath, you will find a new establishment called Tapovanam developing now. Sadhus are gradually moving from Badrinath, because it is getting very congested with people, shops, eggs, chickens and the like. Sadhus don't like this. So they are moving towards Tapovanam, which has hot water springs as well.

You have to walk fourteen miles to reach Gomukh from Gangotri. On the way there is a small establishment of Lal Baba. I visited it when I was in Rishikesh. In the night we used to light a fire there and everybody sat around it, one sadhu smoking bidis or ganja, another drinking, somebody else singing. Nobody told anyone else to stop disturbing him or prevented anyone from singing. Sadhus are trained

to live with others. When ten or twelve sadhus share a room, nobody is anybody's slave or master and nobody listens to anybody else. Someone sings, others laugh, smoke ganja or drink. There are no restrictions for *avadhootas*; they can even drink. For a person who sleeps in the cold, alcohol is nothing. But for a man who lives in comfort and luxury with two extra thick mattresses, alcohol is poison. The yogis of Juna Akhara don't need a roof over their heads. They find some sticks of wood, light a fire, sit around it and smear ash on their bodies. Whether it is raining or snowing doesn't matter, they just cover themselves with a towel. They never catch a cold, nor do they suffer from pneumonia. Those sadhus are warriors.

Himkunda is another place on the way to Gangotri. It is situated at a height of 14,000 feet and in order to reach it you have to cross the river Ganga. Very good arrangements for travellers have been made by the Sikhs who provide food, a quilt and hot water for your bath. They have built a *gurudwara* there, because Guru Nanak performed austerities at that site in a past life. This is mentioned in Guru Granth Sahib and many pilgrims go there. They sing bhajans and kirtan every morning and evening at a height of 14,000 feet, where even the frequency of sound changes. The people who maintain this shrine are very well behaved and you feel very good there.

Be alert everywhere

It is good to visit places of pilgrimage, but you must remember one thing: wherever you go you will always find a mixture of the three gunas. Tamoguna, rajoguna and sattoguna are everywhere in this creation. Therefore, don't go to any holy place thinking that it is a shrine for Lord Vishnu and everybody there will behave like a Vaishnavite. Evil grows in the shade of religion. The shadow of dharma also gives shelter and opportunity for adharma to grow. In India, for example, donning the white Gandhi cap has become the mark of politicians. To every Indian this cap is a symbol of everything that Mahatma Gandhi stood for, but today you find both good and bad people wearing it.

Everyone can find shelter under the shadow of a huge banyan tree, be he a sadhu, a rich merchant or a thief. The tree gives equal shade to them all.

The spirit of visiting pilgrimage sites is now catching on in India, especially with females, which is a good sign. In western countries it is absolutely normal for girls to travel alone. It is necessary that our girls also begin travelling to pilgrimage sites and tourist places on their own. You should not think, “How can girls travel alone?” There are more good people than bad in this world and there is no difficulty in travelling. It is only a psychological fear that prevents girls from travelling on their own.

Baidyanath Dham

Here in Deoghar, there is a temple called Baidyanath Dham. The word *baidya* means ‘doctor’, *nath* means ‘chief’. Baba Baidyanath heals the ills of life. The pilgrims to Baba Baidyanath start their journey from a place on the banks of the river Ganga which is about ninety kilometres from here. They cover the entire route on foot, reaching here in four days, carrying pots of Ganga water with great care on their shoulders. Some people also prostrate at every step of the journey. Doing namaskara, they prostrate on the road and pray with each step throughout the ninety kilometres until they reach the temple. It takes a long time, maybe a few months for them to reach here. People suffering from incurable diseases take this observance. That is austerity, or *tapasya*, perhaps it is like purgatory. Man has made so many mistakes in his lifetime. In order to eliminate the karma, he undertakes many forms of austerity and this is one of them. This type of austerity, which is known as *prayaschit*, is a part of the vedic dharma, and it is found in Christianity as well.

Montserrat

In 1982 I went to Barcelona. About sixty miles from there is a mountain known as Montserrat. When the Turks of the Ottoman Empire attacked Spain, a sadhu monk hid a

wooden statue of the Madonna in a cave. He used to light a fire there for food, warmth and protection from wild animals. In the course of time, the statue became black from the constant smoke which charred the wood. That statue appears like Mother Kali and is known as the Black Madonna. I went to that mountain for darshan of the Black Madonna. Prayers are conducted daily in the church there. Tens of thousands go to offer their prayers and plead for a remedy for their afflictions. Some pray for a son, others for long life, just as they pray here to Baba Baidyanath. Monserrat is a very sacred and beautiful place, and well-managed. Many people also climb the mountain, prostrating themselves at each step. Some even carry a cross on their shoulders as penance.

Mecca

Mecca is a very sacred pilgrimage place and every Muslim goes at least once in his lifetime. Non-Muslims are not allowed inside. The only non-Muslim who was allowed to see Mecca was Guru Nanak, the first guru of the Sikhs, although he himself was not a Sikh. He went to Mecca and upon reaching there lay down and went to sleep, as he was very tired from the arduous journey. A man from a nearby village happened to see him lying there and asked, "Who are you?" Guru Nanak said, "I am an old traveller." The villager said, "But your legs are facing towards the sacred Mecca." Guru Nanak replied, "I am a tired, old man. You put my legs where there is no Mecca." So the villager moved his feet, but then Mecca also moved. Whichever way he turned Guru Nanak's feet, there was the Kaba. Then they said, "This is not an ordinary man," and so he was allowed into the sanctum sanctorum.

At the Kaba in Mecca there is a black stone, shaped somewhat like a shivalingam. I have not been there, but many years ago I saw it in America via satellite transmission along with millions of other people. When pilgrims go to Mecca, they land at Jeddah airport. There they deposit all their clothing and belongings, including their passport,

and then they receive an identity card. While they are in Mecca they have to wear a dhoti and an upper cloth which must be unstitched. There is no singing, television, radio, newspapers, or any form of entertainment permitted in Mecca. A pilgrim on Haj only has to chant *Allah-o-Akbar*, forgetting the whole world. One must rise above, or go beyond both joy and sorrow, but people make no effort in this direction throughout their lives.

In Mecca discipline is observed in the strictest sense and maintained far better than by the pilgrims here. When people go to holy places in India, they listen to popular cinema music. That music also includes songs for Shiva and Devi, but they are very vulgar and distorted. The feeling of devotion, the mood for worship, is distorted by those cheap songs. Even here, *Ramayana* is played on this side and cheap music is played on the other side. This means that we are not a sensitive race of people. We have to be sensitive in these matters. While boiling milk, for example, if salt is added instead of sugar, the milk will curdle. We have to be careful and sensitive. Petrol should not be kept near fire because there can be an accident. This maxim is the same everywhere. The race which is sensitive observes certain principles, but our race has lost this sensitivity.

Previously, I had no inclination to settle in Rikhia. I wanted to stay in one of the holy places along the Ganga. However, all those teerthas have become very dirty and there are shops everywhere. I had to cancel my plans to stay at Rishikesh, Gangotri, Uttarkashi, Tapovan and many other places, but I liked this place. We should be as sensitive about spiritual matters as Muslims are, because in matters related to God, religion, spiritual life and beliefs, purity must be maintained. Baidyanath Dham is such a nice place. We can go inside and see how great it is. But the moment we come out, we see people sitting in queues openly defecating! These holy shrines are places of worship and, therefore, an atmosphere of purity, cleanliness and beauty should be maintained all around them.

Historical Fact and Tradition

Historians have stated many facts about where the great *Mahabharata* war occurred around five thousand years ago. This appears strange, because people are not even clear about the history of the last two and a half thousand years, not to speak of beyond that. They cannot trace the history of Nalanda, of Ashoka and Chandragupta. They are not able to trace the history of Adi Shankaracharya dating back eight hundred to one thousand years. Somebody says eight hundred years, another says eleven hundred, someone else claims two thousand years, but historians have discovered a few facts. For example, when Lord Krishna left Mathura with all his clan, they came to an island known as Vrihad Dwarika and settled there. There is no trace of this island now and nobody knows about it anymore, but the scientists and archaeologists have found stones and other remnants below the sea.

In the same way, the land on which the *Mahabharata* was fought is now in Afghanistan. Kurukshetra is not here in what is known as present day India. If you closely examine the kind of war the *Mahabharata* was, the kind of personalities Bhimsen, Duryodhana or Draupadi were, you will not be able to find these personality types in India today. This is a passive community. It is family oriented, laying too much emphasis on the family system. How can it fight?

The Afghans, on the other hand, are a fighting community. We think only of petty family affairs, but fighters have different priorities. The priority of Draupadi, Bhimsen and Duryodhana was revenge at any cost. Fighters have their own individuality.

History says that the *Mahabharata* war ended near Kabul. It was a kind of civil war but it became global due to the involvement of many kingdoms. It was a very large war. We cannot know everything about it, because there are only little hints given about it in the ancient texts. Our country does not have enough resources to excavate, find the ruins and decipher the languages. In this regard, however, one thing is definite: if any controversy arises over what is fact and what is the accepted tradition, I will be the first victim, because the cultural significance of the *Mahabharata* will be finished in the minds of the people. The *Lakshagriha* (House of Lakh) was situated in Varnavrat near Uttarkashi. There is a traditional legend about that place, but people believe something else.

Often the realities are entirely different to what we believe. The fact is that when Chaitanya Mahaprabhu went to Mathura and Vrindavan, he had inner visions about where the Lord played, where he stole the clothes of the gopis, where the prison was in which he was born. When he expressed his realizations, the established views of the people were shattered. Imagine how difficult this would have become for him. Therefore, although the facts may be misinformed, the ancient history which remains today portrays certain images for us of Lord Rama, Lord Krishna, where the *Mahabharata* war took place, and where Rama and Ravana fought. However, if I were to give my views you would not want to believe them. The views that prevail today would contradict them.

Today, if archaeologists were to go to Afghanistan, find those coins and ruins, and thus confirm the reality of Kurukshetra, even then the majority of people would not believe them. But there is an intellectual class of scientists

and historians who would believe it. The special thing about today's culture is that whatever you say must be backed up by data, hard facts and statistics. Historical facts like those about Dwarika are now being gathered, although no data has yet been found about Ayodhya. Lord Rama was born in the Treta Yuga. Dwapar Yuga followed Treta, and Kali Yuga followed Dwapar. It has been about five thousand years or more since Kali Yuga began. Lord Krishna was born at the end of Dwapar, and Rama was born at the end of Treta. After so many thousands or millions of years, do you expect to find those archaeological remains when metres of solar dust and industrial dust have piled up and many landshifts and landslides have occurred?

Dance of Shiva

*I*n the 1930s I learnt dance at the academy of Uday Shankar. At that time he had just come back from Russia and established his cultural institute at my home town, Almora. Later, I gave dance performances in India right up until 1967. I know Bharat Natyam and Kathak, but it would not be decent on my part to dance at this age. Now, only the Tandava Nritya would be fitting. When Lord Shiva became old he changed the style of his dance. He thought that this dhik, dhik, dhak would not do. So he started the Tandava Nritya and it looked decent for his age, abdomen and waist.

Lord Shiva performed the dance of Nataraja when he was young. There was a competition between Shiva and Parvati. Whichever pose Lord Shiva adopted, Parvati immediately copied it. Then Shiva thought, “Oh Lord, I’m going to lose this competition.” So he took the pose of Nataraja with one leg up in the air. Indian ladies have difficulties with one leg up, but if Parvati had been from Europe she would not have been defeated! Had Parvati belonged to the land of these Gorang Mahaprabhus, Lord Shiva would have lost because she would also have lifted one leg like him. But the poor lady felt shy and said to herself, “If I lift my foot or leg, my decorum will be lost. People will say, ‘What sort of Goddess is she?’ and this story will trickle down from one generation to another.” So Parvati felt embarrassed.

Lord Shiva did the Nataraja dance when he was young. The word *nat* means 'dance' and *raja* means 'king', so Nataraja is the king of dance. There is a kirtan: *Nataraja Nataraja Shiva Shiva Nataraja*. But when Shiva became old, he didn't do the Nataraja dance any longer because it did not suit him, so he composed the Tandava Nritya. Tandava Nritya means foot anywhere, hand anywhere, body anyway, but dance you must! Tandava Nritya actually means wherever the foot falls, let it fall. It is immaterial whether it goes up or down, to the left or right. Only the beat should be there, and that too pretty fast, like Michael Jackson. Swami Niranjan also dances like this, he is an expert. The dances that people do in the West are all Shiva's dance. Put your foot anywhere, do anything, but it has to have rhythm, and that rhythm has to be very fast. That is Tandava.

Tandava means out of control. It is the dance of destruction, not destruction of life, but destruction of maya. So the Tandava Nritya is the dance of destruction. Shiva dances the Tandava to terminate the world, or *samsara*. But *samsara* doesn't mean the material objects of this world, it means the manifest, material consciousness, the illusory nature, the maya. Don't think that by such a dance your society, house, family and friends will all be destroyed. *Samsara* means the worldly nature within man, the ignorance inherent in worldliness, the hypocrisy. These are what are destroyed. God only destroys illusion, ignorance, the material nature of our thinking.

When the sun rises, what does it destroy? Darkness, not light. In the same manner, when Shiva dances the Tandava, it is said that he is enacting the dance of dissolution, *pralaya*. What is *pralaya*? When mind dissolves in Self, that is *pralaya*, the dissolution or merger of me and you. *Laya*, or dissolution, doesn't mean destruction, it is the merger of one into another. It is the cosmic dance of Shiva, representing destruction. This is not the destruction of reality or of light, but of all the dark forces within the mind and consciousness.

Christ Kutir

Guru is a global tradition. Spiritually enlightened beings are born everywhere, in every society, but it is in India that they are patronized, respected, maintained and heeded. Many religious traditions don't have gurus because they believe in the books. The Jews believe in the Torah, Christians in the Bible, Muslims in the Koran and Sikhs in the Guru Granth Sahib. All religions believe in books, not in man, because books are a revelation from God. The Koran was revealed by Him through Mohammed; the Bible was revealed through various prophets and saints. Who was Christ? Who was Mohammed? They did not sacrifice Christ, but they crucified him because they wanted to get rid of this man who was challenging what was written in the books. In India we have many revealed books as well. We believe in the Vedas, the *Ramayana*, but we also realize that we don't understand these ancient tenets.

There has to be somebody who understands them to explain these texts. The person who can explain them is the guru. There are many passages in the scriptures of every religion which are not explained and cannot be understood. It is only the guru who comes to explain them. Some believers said, "No guru is required to explain; just follow what is written there!" In India we know that the Vedas and Upanishads are great, but we are not great. We are ordinary

people who may not understand correctly, so we need an explanation from a guru who has realized the truth. So, for this reason, the guru is respected in India. Minor lapses of the guru are forgotten. Gurus are awarded a sort of amnesty here, but this is not the case abroad. Although guru is a global tradition, you won't find gurus arising from the West or the Middle East. They may be born there, but they are not allowed to survive. That is the reason why the tradition of guru has started from India since time immemorial.

Christ in India

The ancestors of Jesus Christ had migrated to Israel from Kashmir via Iraq. There is a history of this recorded in books. You may not have read them, but I have. In the Dead Sea Scrolls a monastic community is described called the Essenes. Christ visited them and asked questions to which they had no reply. So they told him to go to India in order that his questions could be answered. Christ came to India at an early age and stayed here for thirteen years. These are the lost years which are not mentioned in the Bible. From India, he went to Nepal, then to Benares and Puri, where he participated in the Ratha Yatra. He also went to Kerala in South India and to many other places, where there is evidence of his visits. Many recorded texts are available.

During his travels in India, Christ made certain observations and then returned to Israel. When he returned, he took two great philosophical influences with him: one was Buddhism and the other was Vaishnavism. Buddhism is a fixed code of conduct, morality, truth, non-violence, goodness, non-stealing, etc. Vaishnavism is extreme devotion, surrender to God, bhakti. However, when Christ started to teach these things amongst his people, they did not like it. They said, "What nonsense this man is talking!" Ultimately, Christ became a political scapegoat and was crucified. However, he did not die on the cross, although he was in a very weakened condition. When he was removed from the cross, herbal treatment was administered to him and he recovered.

After recovering, he was forced to flee from his own land and he went to Europe and then to Iraq, where he stayed for many years. So he was quite old by the time he reached India; he was not young. He arrived at Srinagar, Kashmir, a Himalayan valley, thirty years after the date of his crucifixion with his mother Mary, whom we call Miriam, and his girlfriend, Mary Magdalene, the same one he had saved from being stoned. In Srinagar, there is the tomb of Christ and Mary. The tomb of Christ is called Nabi Asaf and Isu Asaf. The caretaker of that tomb is a Muslim, and he has a complete scroll in which all these historical events are recorded. Many great scholars from Europe come to see that scroll and offer to pay him a lot of money, but he does not show it to them. Although he looks after the tomb of Christ, he is a Muslim, and Muslims are unshakeable in their faith and religion.

Giving and receiving

These facts about Christ are not accepted by Christians at all. I have told you all this because we have established Christ Kutir here. I want to show that a Hindu can go to a church or a mosque. I participate in *namaz* on Fridays. I can teach you *namaz* because I know how to do it. I can preach in a church because I know the Bible. In the same way, why can't a Christian or a Muslim pray according to the vedic tradition? This can surely happen if disharmony is not created by vested interests. But if it happens those vested interests will become powerless because their primary aim is to separate the religions into factions. That is why Christ Kutir was made, and you must visit it. Offer some money and prayers there and you never know, the blessings of Christ may descend faster.

Receiving the blessings of Christ does not mean becoming a Christian. You remain a follower of the religion in which you have been born. Changing sects is one thing and following a religion is a different thing. Changing sects is a political process, a socio-political behaviour, but

worshipping God and having devotion is an altogether different thing. If you want to worship and chant in Arabic, what does it matter? You can pray early in the morning, not in Sanskrit but in Arabic. We find it odd because we don't know Arabic and we like classical prayers in Sanskrit because we are familiar with the language. Anyway, whichever language you pray in, you should go to Christ Kutir. Offer some money, there is no harm in parting with little coins, and, moreover, that money which you offer will come back to you. I do not want any money. Where shall I keep it? I have no pockets in my loincloth.

Disease Neurosis

Physical diseases are present in each and everyone. You are not the only sick person. You have a disease, your father has a different disease and so on. Sickness of one kind or another plagues each and everyone. But very few people are able to live without the thought of disease while they have a disease. Thoughts about disease constantly circulate in the minds of most people. Recently, an elderly man who has been acquainted with me for many years came here to see me. He suffers from constipation and worries about the toilet twenty-four hours a day. He is a rich man and has tried every treatment: allopathy, naturopathy, homeopathy, ayurveda, magnetotherapy and all the other 'pathies' which are popular. He has also been abroad for some treatment but to no avail, and twenty-four hours of the day the ghost of constipation is haunting him. For the last twenty years I have been telling him that constipation is not a disease, it is a mentality. He agrees but is unable to regulate the switch.

The mind of man is made up of a metal which is composed of two elements, raga and dwesha. The mind of every human being, be it mine or yours, is afflicted by raga and dwesha. *Raga* means 'attachment' and *dwesha* means 'repulsion'. If you have a headache, the mind assumes the corresponding pattern; *tadakara vritti* enters into it. The

moment this vritti comes, the entire mentality assumes the corresponding pattern. So you think, “Now I have a headache. Is it due to a brain tumour?” and so on. Thoughts of this kind begin to haunt the mind. If there is a pain in the stomach, then you will think a thousand things. These days modern science has given so much knowledge that you know a stomach ache may mean renal colic, peptic ulcer, gall bladder and so on. At least fifty diseases cross your mind, including cancer.

How can the mind of man be freed from this neurosis? Lord Buddha, Mahavir, all the saints and mahatmas have said that everybody who is born in this world has to undergo suffering. Nobody is free from disease. If you ask each and everyone you will find that this is true. Nobody is free from disease, suffering or faults. We are all beggars, therefore, we have to suffer. Those who are without fault become liberated. If you ask the way to become fault free, *nirakara*, then I can lecture you for hours. But if you ask the way to be free from suffering, disease and poverty, I cannot give any remedy, nor does God have one. If God had the power to eliminate suffering and poverty, today you would not see even a single poor person in this world. If nature had this capacity, you would not see so many crippled people and incongruities in life.

Forget your suffering

So listen carefully, you will have to forget your suffering and this is the truth. Even when Lord Rama was born, he still did gardening, watering and hard work in the ashram of his guru for twelve years. Another twelve years he spent in exile. He spent twenty-six years of his life without Sita, whom he loved very much. So what pleasures did Lord Rama enjoy in his life? There is no documentary evidence of his falling sick, but I am not ready to accept that he never did, because whenever the soul is embodied as a human being it is bound to fall sick.

Take the example of Lord Krishna. His life was threatened even before his birth. He was on the hit list of Kansa before he

was conceived. What did he do all his life? As a boy he grazed the cows. When he grew older he was admitted to school, which he would never attend. He spent a great part of his life in the capital of Hastinapur, trying to sort out the problems of his cousins, the Pandavas. In the end he was assassinated! No matter how good one's karmas are, whether one is a great person or one is born as a partial incarnation of God, still he will have to bear the afflictions of the physical body.

There are six afflictions of the body from birth to death, known as *shasta vikara*. One affliction is old age. Nobody can remain young forever; whoever is born has to grow old. Another affliction is disease. When you suffer from disease, the only way out is to find some way by which your mind can forget the suffering for sometime, be it for an hour, ten hours, one day, one month or four months. You should be able to forget the suffering for sometime, just as a man forgets everything when he is sleeping. You don't feel any pain in sleep because your mind is temporarily in a state of suspension. But when the mind is alert and awake, then what is the solution? That solution has to be found by you independently.

No one is untainted

Many great people in the world, such as Einstein, Max Plank and Madame Curie have been afflicted by one disease or another. One was paralyzed, another was blind, another could not walk. If you read Isaac Newton's life story, you will discover that he was sick all his life. Many great musicians, artists and writers have been afflicted with disease and poverty. Kalidas died in the house of a prostitute. There has never been any poet greater than Kalidas. He composed poetry in Sanskrit, but where did his life end? In a red light area! I wouldn't call him corrupt, but he was not an untainted person. No artist or scientist has been untainted. Only a few great people in this world whom we call mahatmas or great souls have been untainted. Their numbers can be counted on the fingertips.

In the course of life, you may be afflicted with many different kinds of suffering due to pain, disease, death, poverty, wealth, loss of friends, ill-repute and so on. In such situations you must find a way to absorb your mind in another subject where it dissolves totally. Ramakrishna Paramahansa had cancer, Adiguru Shankaracharya had fistula, Ramana Maharshi had piles and Swami Vivekananda had diabetes. How did they all deal with these sufferings? They identified themselves with God, Brahman or Atman, and not with disease and suffering. Therefore, the wise ask God only for those things which are appropriate for their spiritual evolution, and not for the removal of suffering, disease or pain.

Avadhoota Tradition

*I*n my early life I had all those experiences which were normal for my family, village and caste. When I came to the ashram, however, I followed the rules of the gurukula tradition, because all the ashrams in India from North to South, whether Shaiva, Vaishnava or any other sect, follow them. In India it is understood that the ashram is a place where Buddhists, Jains, Hindus, Muslims and people of all faiths and castes can come. People who believe in caste and untouchability as well as people who live a totally modern life can come. The ashrams must be maintained in such a way that nobody has any objection.

In the next ten years you will find that the ashrams in India will be filled to capacity. The best place for foreigners to live in India is the ashram. There they get work to do and food to eat. They find a detached community and an opportunity to do kirtan, bhajan and sadhana. Moreover, there is no worry about income tax, property tax and so on. This is already happening with great speed. Crowds are gathering, therefore, the ashrams should be organized under the framework of new rules. Earlier the rules were framed with only Indian people in view. Now rules should be made for a global society. The rules for a global society and for Indian society are different. In Shringeri and other maths of Jagadguru Shankaracharya, the rules are framed only for

a Hindu society. However, the rules here in Paramahansa Alakh Bara are for a global society.

Transcending barriers

I have no trouble here because paramahamsas transcend all the rules of sannyasa life. I am free from all restrictions. The restrictions which are imposed on a sannyasin are redundant in my case. Sannyasa has four stages: *kutichaka*, *bahudaka*, *hamsa* and *paramahamsa*. As long as a sannyasin is in the first three stages, he has to operate within a certain framework of regulations, but today I'm free from it. The rules don't apply to me at all. I don't have to put on geru. I live an independent life as I wish. The rules apply to all sannyasins, but the tradition of *avadhoota* is different. The word *dhoota* means 'consciousness' and *ava* means 'no', so *avadhoota* means a person who has completely transcended normal consciousness and whose behaviour does not follow the normal patterns of living.

Avadhoota is a separate tradition and a state of consciousness as well. It may be that we wear clothes or don't wear anything at all. We can eat anything and do anything. The tradition of *avadhoota* is related to the state of consciousness. When the consciousness does not reside in worldly matters, when it is free from the games of the world, from pain and pleasure, from involvement in any relations, illusions or attachments, then one is an *avadhoota*. The *avadhoota* considers nobody as son or daughter, as male or female. For him, garlands of flowers and snakes are the same; nobody is wise or stupid. One who lives as a fool among fools, a youth among youth, is an *avadhoota*.

Beyond duality

An *avadhoota* is someone who does not see any difference. Although difference is apparent, still he does not see it. The differences have always existed and they will continue to exist. But suppose your consciousness becomes like that of a child of one and a half or two years, then what will you see? That is the

state of an avadhoota, when you become like a child. When the duality of mind is completely extinct, when you become like a two-year-old infant, the perception or awareness is different. If you don't know what a snake or a flower garland is then there is no difference between them. That is the state of avadhoota, when the distinction of duality ceases. In the state of duality, I am a big officer and you are a small man, I am a male and you are a female, I am good and you are bad. Whenever you think like this, duality exists. But when only oneness is experienced, that is *advaita*, non-duality.

The state of non-duality is attained slowly through effort; there is no urgency. When you reach that state, then you have gone beyond all bondages. The avadhoota stage is attained by only a few saints, and when they attain this state their behaviour becomes just like that of a small child. When their consciousness is like that of a small child, it becomes necessary for someone to look after them. They should be watched, otherwise they might drop their clothes and walk away, fall into some pit or get lost somewhere. Therefore, some *sevak* must be there to look after him, and in that way he lives with his guru.

At present I can protect myself, wash myself, go to the toilet, cook for myself, take my meals, open and close the doors, and talk to people, so I am in the dual state. But someday, by God's grace, it may happen that my fuse will blow, then the bulb of normal sensorial awareness will blow too. If the light of worldliness blows out, then who will look after me? Because at that time I would not think according to dualistic worldliness. At that time the disciples would have to look after me. This state is attained when a person performs hard austerities with a pure heart. He does not desire name or fame, disciples or institutions, attachments or illusions, wife or long life. He does not even desire to be disease free. If there is suffering, toil and pain, let it remain! If there is no food today it doesn't matter! He does not mind anything. This is a very high state. Many rishis and munis have attained this state. Jada Bharat was a rishi who attained this state.

Living Experience

The word *Atman* is used synonymously with *Brahman*; there is no difference. *Atma-vidya*, *Brahma-vidya*, *Adhyatma-vidya* are the philosophies related with these terms. Anyone can understand them by reading the books, but experience is very difficult to obtain. As far as rational explanation and understanding are concerned, anybody can explain and anybody can understand these terms, but there is something else called experience. What does experience mean? Experience is not possible through the mind, senses or intellect. It is called living experience which is the experience of the soul. The path of living the experience is very difficult. Only a few walk that way, and out of them one or two reach half way; very rarely does someone make it to the end. It is a state in which everything is seen right in front.

You may sit down and read an entire book about America, Russia or the atom bomb, but you have not experienced it, you have not actually seen it. Similarly, the experience of the soul is called *Atma-vidya* or *Brahma-vidya*. The same experience has a hundred different names; it is called the vision of God, self-realization, *moksha*, *kaivalya*, *samadhi* and so on. One living experience has many names, and the people who have lived them have not been able to express them ultimately, just as nobody has been able to describe the taste of cyanide. There is a story about a man who took

cyanide as an experiment in order to be able to describe its taste. But before he could spell it out, he passed away. In the same way Kabir has also said,

*No one returns from beyond
To whom I could run
And learn of the path to God.
All depart from here
With load after load
Of accumulated baggage.*

*My master comes from beyond
With knowledge
Profound and pure;
He pilots the battered
Boat of seekers
And ferries them
To the opposite shore.*

So the question remains, what is that state? The Upanishads say it is like fire, like an explosion, like space, like wind or like infinity. They go on hypothesizing until in the end they have to say, '*Neti, neti*' – not this, not this.

Path of realization

So, one should move on that path because it is a special path. The path of sannyasa, no matter how the world interprets it, is the path to the knowledge of divinity, the path of Brahmavidya. The aim of a sannyasin is Atmaavidya, realization of the Self, not by commentaries, thinking or reflection, but by direct experience, *aparoksha anubhuti*. That experience which is independent of the mind and senses is called *aparoksha anubhuti*. It cannot be accomplished in one life; one has to struggle for it life after life. First you have to find the path and then you have to walk it. When you are walking on the path, it is not that you don't fall, you do fall. After all, you will become tired after walking and walking, fall ill and think of turning back and putting an end to that

journey. That happens because the path is not straight nor is it easy to follow.

As a sincere sadhaka I must make this clear to you. I have fallen on this journey. However, my fall is not the same fall that you experience. One man falls down while climbing and the other jumps straight down without making any effort to rise. My fall is a part of the spiritual journey, whereas your fall is not. You fall because you have to, it is your destiny. Everyone of you has to come to this path one day or another, whether you wish it or not. So, if you find someone who can give you the experience, then a start can be made. This experience does not happen automatically; you need someone to give it to you. As far as the experience is concerned it is effortless, but to reach it requires effort and you have to make the effort yourself. The experience itself is transcendental, beyond logic, beyond mind. Therefore, the Upanishads say, *Na tatra vaacha agachhati na mano gachhati*: Neither speech nor mind can enter into that domain.

Gurubhais and Ashram Days

During my travels in America, I met the renowned artist Peter Max whose work was used at the world summit on the environment in Rio de Janeiro. He had the rare ability to visualize extraordinary colour combinations and reproduce them on canvas. Because of his unique colour combinations, he became a very rich and famous artist. Later, he connected with the swamis coming from India, such as Swami Satchidananda, Swami Shivapremananda and myself. He has written several books on art in which he quotes the Vedas, Vedanta, the Upanishads, the *Gita*, Swami Satchidananda and Swami Sivananda. He does not quote anybody else. He is a very simple man.

Swami Ramamurti

I also met a good swami called Swami Ramamurti. He was a medical doctor from Aligarh, India, who migrated to the USA. Before sannyasa he was known as Dr Ramamurti Mishra. He was a brahmin Sanskrit scholar and also a neurosurgeon in the New York Hospital. After certain miraculous experiences he gave up his job and started teaching Vedanta and Sanskrit. He established a large ashram in Munro, New York on 125 acres of land which he named Ananda Ashram. He founded that ashram for any sannyasin who had just come from India. I first met Dr

Ramamurti at a reception in London in 1967, and he invited me to stay at Ananda Ashram when I visited America. So when we arrived in America, we went straight to Ananda Ashram. There we were given a room with a kitchen and programs were organized for us.

It was Ramamurti Mishra who opened the channel there. He was what we would call the reception centre for Indian genius. His Ananda Ashram went very well. All the talented swamis, artists and musicians went to Ananda ashram when they first arrived in America and all these formative geniuses were good friends.

New York is the place which receives all the sannyasins, all the genius from India, and San Francisco is the place which ultimately absorbs them. San Francisco is a very spiritual city, like the Varanasi of India, because all the sadhus and saints have their ashrams there. You can read in the daily newspapers about lectures on Vedanta, Samkhya, classical Indian musical recitals and so on. San Francisco is the holy city of the USA. There were many families I met there who remembered Rabindranath Tagore and other eminent Indian personalities.

Swami Satchidananda

My gurubhai, Swami Satchidananda, who belongs to Jaffna in Sri Lanka, also went to New York and Connecticut via Ananda Ashram. He is a Tamil of Jaffna state. Between the two of us it is only a matter of two or three years junior or senior. I came first and then he arrived. When he came to the ashram in Rishikesh he never shaved but always kept a beard and moustache, right from the beginning. He used to practise all the kriyas of hatha yoga.

Friend of none

Whenever I went to America, Europe or Italy, we used to call Swami Satchidananda. We called him to India as well. But we did not run after each other because, despite being gurubhais, we believe that everyone comes into this

world alone, nobody comes with anybody else. Everybody comes alone and everybody will go alone. So why keep this attachment for anyone? Moreover, a sadhu is the friend of no one; he takes a puff and then moves on. One should never be anyone's friend. Everybody has come with his karma. Mother, father, sister, brother, everyone has come with and lives with their own karmas, but by some mistaken notion we think we should be dependent on each other.

This dependence on others is imbibed from childhood. It is also taught in the study of social sciences that your burden is on me and I am dependent on you. We call it responsibility or accountability. However, in truth, there is nothing like that. Every person has come into this world with independent karma, which he has earned for himself individually. He comes with his earnings and he departs with his earnings. I agree that you are my sister, mother, son or brother, but this is just a relationship for the sake of convenience. It is just a belief and nothing else. Therefore, sannyasins do not run after gurubhais.

Another of my gurubhais, Swami Shivapremananda, lives in Chile. He is from a Bengali family which settled in Bhagalpur. We met in 1956–57 and became good friends. So my gurubhais are spread all over the globe on every continent. Wherever I go I find sannyasins and gurubhais, but I understand that I have come alone with my karma, and my gurubhais have come with their karma.

My reign of terror

All my gurubhais have been gentlemen: Swami Chidananda, Swami Satchidananda, Swami Shivapremananda, but I was never a gentleman. It is only now that I have become a gentleman. I was what you call a bully. Rishikesh was under my reign of terror. I did not spare anyone who made mischief in the ashram. You have such bullying types of people in your cities. I was like that in Rishikesh and everybody was afraid of me.

Since childhood, I have lived in that type of environment. I used to get upset with my guru as well. Once I even threw the keys at him and said, "Run your ashram yourself by your own rules." Actually, what happened was that my guru had made a rule that first the food would be offered upstairs in the temple of Lord Vishwanath where the worship was done. After that, the bell for meals would be rung and then everybody would eat. One day Swamiji was visited by a guest, Mr. Gangasharan, he was a very devoted man. At that time I was the kitchen in charge and Swamiji said to me, "Serve him some food." I replied, "There is still some time before the bell." Swamiji said, "He is also a god." I said, "Okay, then take your keys and feed him yourself. I am going." And I left the kitchen.

So I used to get upset with my guru as well. However, it never lasted long because my guru was a very nice person and it is difficult to be angry with a nice person. He was gentle, like a cow, totally calm and quiet. It is very difficult to get agitated with such a person. It is very easy to fight with a man who gets angry. If you speak loudly to me then my shouting will be justified. But my guru never shouted, he was always peaceful. His mind was totally tranquil, but still I said to him, "Take your keys and run your own ashram. I am going." And I shut myself in my room. For three days I kept myself locked up because of anger. I knew I should not have said anything harsh to Gurudev, but my anger was so strong. So, for three days I kept my door locked from the inside and did not go outside, even for food, to the bathroom or the toilet. Then, on the third day I began to feel restless. When my stomach was empty, my mind cooled down a little.

My gurubhais used to say that all the signs of a saint were present in them but absent in me. I had no saintly qualities. A saint should be gentle, but I was never gentle. Only now have I become a little mild. But despite this, I was always the first to follow what my guru said. He said, "Spread the message of yoga throughout the world and give it a scientific outlook." Nobody else could do this, but I did it. So, it is not

only the good disciples that guru's grace is showered upon. The most offensive son proves to be useful at times.

A sannyasin's cause

In 1947 I was in Lahore during the Indo-Pakistan partition riot and I saw all the violence with my own eyes. I was rescued from there by the army. When the partition of the two countries was made, thousands of people were slaughtered while crossing the borders. After that, the Marwari Relief Society in Calcutta asked for some swamis to help and my name was given. Fallen from the sky and stuck in a palm tree – that was my situation. So, I was sent to a refugee centre in Bangladesh. Everybody was running for their lives. Some people were shooting, others were cutting throats. The refugees lived in tents and there was a big kitchen for them. I was in charge of the kitchen which had to feed four to five thousand people daily. I had to take responsibility as chief and get the work done. One day the truckload of grain did not arrive. Rice and dal were to come but nothing arrived. It was getting on for four o'clock and I was wondering what was the matter. Then the news came that the truck had been looted on the way. "Okay," I said, "tomorrow I will go with the truck."

The next day we loaded the truck and I kept a rifle with me. On the way some people tried to stop us, but I managed to thwart them and they ran away. For one week we escorted the truck in this way. Then one day someone saw me in the truck and said, "That is the man who is stopping us from plundering the truck, identify him." That was it. I left the refugee camp that very day and went to Calcutta. I resigned from the Marwari Relief Society and cleared my account. I said, "This is not the kind of work for a sannyasin. My dharma is service, but a sannyasin lives for a higher purpose. If I feed people at the risk of my life and one day someone kills me, my service is of little value. I was not born to die such a cheap death. If I have to die, I will die for a cause." So, I refused to work like that any more.

Becoming soft

But by the grace of my guru I gradually became softer and softer. Today, I have become so soft that I won't move even if these villagers come to kill me. I will not retaliate because now I feel that one who expresses anger is a fool. I was a foolish man. The wise remain quiet. Non-violence or non-cruelty is the greatest quality of a human being. This is the quality of learned men. Fighting, beating, abusing and teasing are not the qualities of a saint, they are not even the qualities of a human being. But this anger was my *samskara*. When I was born, the first thing I touched was a rifle. So you can imagine what the *samskaras* are of such a man. My parents could have made me touch the *Gita*, *Ramayana* or *tulsi* leaves, but they chose a rifle. I have heard that Swami Vivekananda also used to get very angry. He was a partial incarnation of Lord Shiva. When he got angry, people poured water on his head to cool him down.

Diversity is Truth

There was a great Vaishnava saint who used to say, “If only mango trees grew on this earth and all the babool trees vanished, how dull it would look! There should be mango trees, but there should also be banyan trees, thorny trees and other types of fruit and flowering trees also. All the varieties should be there, only then can you say how beautiful this earth is.” Beauty lies in diversity, monotony is unpleasant. In this world variety has been created by God. At the beginning of the *Ramayana* it is mentioned that sin and merit, pleasure and pain, auspiciousness and inauspiciousness, night and day, ascetics and criminals, demons and devas, good and bad, everything has been created by Lord Brahma, the creator, in order to make the world beautiful.

First of all, God created two things: one was light and the other was darkness, and the fun is that they are both linked to each other. Can you imagine darkness without light? So, darkness and light are interrelated. If you want God to create only light and not darkness, He will say, “I can’t do it. If there is light, there has to be darkness.” God has created this world with variety. You can see variety and diversity everywhere. Diversity exists within the house, within the nation; you can see it everywhere. In the history of India there have been many people who envisioned unity

in diversity, but their numbers are gradually decreasing. We always wanted unity in diversity. If you look inside an orange there are many slices, but from the outside it is one.

No two alike

In this world no two people are alike. Two brothers and two sisters are not alike, even twins differ. It is also true that no two fingerprints are the same. In order to prove the identity of a person, the left thumbprint is taken, because no two people in the world share the same print. Isn't it a great wonder that every person has a unique thumbprint? It is amazing how God creates differences. He has extraordinary plans and strange ways of thinking. It is a scientific fact that no two thumbprints are alike. Therefore, even in modern countries where people are literate, the thumbprint is used because this is the best means of identification. No one can change it. Illiterate people use it instead of a signature, but even educated people have to put their thumbprint on legal documents and property transfers so that they cannot be duplicated.

If no two thumbprints are alike, then no two people are alike. So how can two minds be alike? That means your thinking will not match mine and my thinking will not match yours. However, this does not mean there should be conflict between us. Two people can live happily together despite having different ideas and thinking patterns. It is not compulsory that a husband and wife should think alike. The husband may drink and eat meat, while the wife does not drink and is a pure vegetarian. The husband may gamble, but the wife does not. The husband is extroverted and always jokes with others, while the wife likes solitude. It is fine to have different natures and this should not be a reason to fight. It is not possible that the nature of husband and wife are like carbon copies. If you think marriage can be successful only if the husband and wife have similar natures, then you are mistaken.

This mathematics operates on the principle of plus and minus, not on plus and plus. That is why you find a

dichotomy in religions, and differences in opinions and feelings. In English people say, “I don’t want anything”, and in Spanish, “I don’t want nothing”. The difference is in the grammar. So when differences exist in the language, in the clothing, in the habits, and if difference is the cause of conflict, then it will never end. However, the root cause of conflict is not difference, but man’s own weakness; it is his own creation. If the conflict between two societies is considered to be within one’s own mind, that should be corrected. Until you correct your own mind, you cannot change yourself or anyone else, no matter how much you explain. It is good to change the rural masses, but even Lord Buddha failed in this. All the prejudices that he stood against still prevail. Although his knowledge came from within, the people to whom he explained these things could not change themselves.

Social change

Nevertheless, many aspects have been reformed, such as animal sacrifice and so forth. Mahatma Gandhi, myself and many others contributed to the transformation, but individual change does not bring about a change in society. Social change takes place through mass reformation, but it is impossible now, because probably the way we are explaining things to the people is not appropriate. Mahatma Gandhi tried to impress upon people that untouchability is not good, yet despite all his efforts it still continues. Intercaste marriages are not accepted, and it is rare that a boy rebels and goes against this system. Only then does intercaste marriage take place, otherwise the parents could not even dream of it. A person belonging to a so-called forward caste won’t search for a girl for his son among the so-called backward castes. If the boy himself chooses such a girl, that is a different story.

Social change can only take place when circumstances change. An example of educated people is NRIs (Non-Resident Indians) living abroad, those who have been born

and brought up there. These people come to India to choose a partner because abroad there is no tradition of arranged marriage, so they come here to search. There was a Sindhi boy of my acquaintance. He used to go to Paris and there he became very close friends with a Punjabi girl. The parents panicked and the matter was presented to me. I said, "What does it matter if they decide to marry? The boy and the girl have chosen each other. She is not a bad person." I knew the girl was educated, earning well and independent. She lived on her own and had a good character and conduct.

The parents said, "Swamiji, this is not permissible in our society." I said, "What do you mean by your society? After all, they are both Indians." They did not understand, but the boy became adamant with a little support from me. I said, "Go ahead and marry," and they got married, so it was an intercaste marriage. The parents have not been able to reconcile themselves with it even today, and that is why the prejudice in our society remains. This is a small example, but the fact is that as long as there is no change in our mind, nobody can transform us. However, it is a Catch 22 situation because by the time our society reforms, its needs will have changed further.

Culture of diversity

In reality, we don't belong to one culture. Everyone in France is not French, just as in India everyone is not Indian. Some have come from Afghanistan, some from Iran and other places. Everyone in America is not American. All the people in Britain are not British. All the people in Saudi Arabia are not Saudi. There is no homogeneity. Everywhere there is a mixed culture, there is diversity, and diversity is the truth. We say there is one culture because of political exigencies. A garden can't just be mangoes or just roses. In a garden there are many flowers, many trees, and many varieties of plants.

When we say Indian, Russian or Italian, we are talking about a pluralistic society, a culture of many varieties. People have come from all parts of the globe to participate in this

Sat Chandi Maha Yajna. They may follow different religions, but still they are initiated into the vedic tradition. Whether you are a follower of the vedic tradition or not, still you can read the Vedas, Upanishads and so on. Different countries have different religions, but one is still free to learn about other traditions. At kirtan tonight, you will see people from all religions and nationalities singing together and you will not feel any difference between them. It will feel as if lost brothers and sisters have met again at one place. Slowly, more and more people are arriving here, of all ages, colours, castes, religions and nationalities, and therefore, this yajna is unique.

Good samskaras grow slowly

The priests are conducting this yajna according to the vedic tradition, and all the rules are being followed as far as possible, but there are some limitations. You cannot bring Ganga water by hand every time you feel thirsty. We get water from a deep bore well. We don't have an official water supply here like they have in the cities. The arrangements for food are made by people from Calcutta. We get milk from Bhagalpur and Barauni. Our driver brings fifty litres of milk everyday. It is not easy. These days the local cows do not have the capacity that you read of in the scriptures, where they speak about rivers of milk flowing. These days many people hardly even get to see milk. But we will change the picture of the place in the next few years. If they don't have cereal, they will surely have milk. Last year we donated many cows to the villagers. However, I don't want these people to become rich, because the moment wealth comes, bottles of wine enter the house. Wealth moves people away from their path.

Good samskaras must come before wealth, and they will come only when people work hard and struggle. A free supply of goods doesn't work. Education becomes unnecessary. Therefore, the samskaras are growing slowly here and the chiefs of the different villages understand these things. I don't see these people very often. The best way for

a sannyasin to contact the masses is not to meet them. He should remain in seclusion, do his sadhana, chant the Lord's name and do pooja. For a few days in a year, he may meet the people and tell them whatever has to be told. There is no need to go to each house like a social worker and spend hours talking to them; that doesn't work. A dog's tail cannot be straightened that easily. All the prophets in the past have failed to bring about social reformation. Buddha failed, Christ failed, Kabir failed, Shankaracharya failed, Gandhi failed, but I do not want to fail. I don't care about the failure of others, but I won't fail. I don't want to be defeated like my predecessors.

Sanskrit Language

Sing the name of the Mother. Listen to God's name because it is the sweetest of all sweets, much better than rasgullas and chocolates. If you hear two bhajans daily, then all the bitterness that persists in the heart will vanish. I have set all the beautiful Sanskrit slokas to music. I used to compose music and teach it as well. I was never a formal music teacher, but I used to compose music and my notation books are still kept. I composed *Saundarya Lahari* in Yaman Kalyan, *Pashupati Stotra* in Bhupali raga, *Shiva Tandava Stotra* in Bhupali and so on. In my family Sanskrit was the spoken language, just as you speak the local language in your homes. So, my first language is Sanskrit and I began to speak it after I was born. Later I learnt English in third grade and Arabic/Urdu in fourth grade. I learnt Sanskrit first and, therefore, my love for it is that which one has for the mother tongue.

Our culture is deeply related to the Sanskrit language. It is our mother tongue, and it has the force of the maternal link with this culture. Sanskrit is our mother language, but not the official language. Hindi is our official home language and English is our business language for routine work. Everyone talks about Sanskrit and how it should be revived. However, in today's world the basis of language is utility. The language which is not useful will not survive, no matter how

much cultural identification it carries and no matter how much effort you make to revive it. Muslims are trying very hard to revive the Urdu language through Urdu schools and Urdu systems, but it is not useful at all. Similarly, Hindus are trying to revive Sanskrit, but nothing happens because it is not useful. However, Sanskrit does have a bright horizon if its utility in computer sciences is discovered.

Computers can operate in any language: Hindi, Urdu, Arabic, Chinese or Japanese. All the languages and scripts have their respective computer programs, but languages based on phonetics are more suited to computer programming than others. Sanskrit is such a language. There is a relationship between phonetic sounds and written letters. The sounds which I am producing have a corresponding form, which is known as a letter, a script. The speech and script are interrelated, but at times it happens that the speech is entirely different from its script. For example, 'pa' is a sound and it can be written down in any script. In English you write just 'p', in Urdu you write 'pe'. When the vibration and the form of sound are uniform, it is phonetic, but when only a mark is used to identify that sound, it is syllabic. All the languages that exist in the world today are syllabic. Sanskrit is the only language that is phonetic, based on sounds.



Sri Swamiji with Swami Niranjan



Swami Dharmashakti



Swami Atmananda



Swami Nirvanjan playing with Bholenath

Sacrifice

The tradition of sacrifice is universal and has come down from antiquity. Sacrifice exists in every religion except Buddhism and Jainism. It exists in Christianity, Islam, Judaism and the vedic culture, The Vedas mention the sacrifice of animals as well as humans. *Narmedha* and *Ashwamedha* are two great sacrifices which were performed in ancient times. The Jews celebrate Passover, and in the Bible, Isaac was ordered by God to sacrifice his son. But before he could complete the sacrifice, God said, “No, you don’t have to sacrifice your son, sacrifice a lamb instead.” This tradition is a very old one and it has penetrated deeply into society.

In Sanskrit, the word for sacrifice is *bali vaishvadevas*, and it is a very important aspect of tantric worship among Shaktas. There are many forms of sacrifice in primitive cultures. There are communities which sacrifice lambs, pigeons, buffalos, goats and swine. Buddha questioned it, the rishis and munis questioned it, but still this tradition continues today, because it is the view of our people that if a community believes in something, let them do it. I don’t agree with it or accept it, either as a sannyasin or as a follower of the vedic dharma, but if you want to do it I don’t mind. This is the spirit of our religion: we do not denounce the faith of any particular sect. Although I may not agree

with your belief in sacrificing a lamb or a goat, I will not object to it. You can go ahead, but I don't believe in it.

I have read the sociological interpretations, but they are also not correct. The tradition of sacrifice is definitely an expression of spiritual faith in our society. There are many people who are total vegetarians, yet even in their homes sacrificial offerings are made. I have seen this and it is very difficult to eradicate it. Since coming to this village, I have found out that the people here perform sacrifices. I do not oppose it, but I do not support it either, and the villagers know this. If they want to make an offering, I say, "Go ahead, what difference does it make?" But I never give my affirmation on this matter because I do not accept it. They have a particular faith, so why should I break it? They have prayed for the fulfilment of a wish and then said, "If this wish is fulfilled, then we will offer a goat." I cannot break their faith, but still I do not believe in it myself.

There have been many disputes about sacrifice; even the rishis and munis fought with each other over this issue. Lord Buddha very firmly opposed it. Earlier, animal sacrifices were made at the end of each fire ceremony. This custom has become almost obsolete now, but it still continues in some parts. In the valley of Kumaon, to which I belong, a big fair is celebrated each year for Nanda Devi. During this occasion buffaloes and goats are sacrificed and prasad is sent to every house. Goat meat is sold throughout the entire town on that day. I know how these rituals are performed, because sacrifices took place frequently in my own community. In my family there was a tradition of sacrificing a male buffalo. The elders of my family severed the head with a sword. The other villagers used to sacrifice two to four goats at a time and the prasad was sent to all the other houses, sometimes the head, sometimes a leg.

Here the villagers offer bali during festivals. When sacrificial offerings are made, and they are made very frequently, for example, when a child is born, when a marriage is taking place, on Holi and on Diwali, they always

bring prasad for Bholenath. He has the prasad, I don't take it. Of course, I don't mind, and if I were non-vegetarian I would have been happy to take it, because it is prasad. In fact, it is considered to be *maha prasad*, the great prasad, not just prasad. So these people are vegetarians, but still they perform family sacrifices.

Although I neither condone nor reject it, I don't understand why sacrifice is performed. Why is bloodshed necessary to please God? I have read all the books of the Muslim, Christian and Jewish traditions, I have read the Vedas. I have read about the entire tradition of sacrifice, but I still don't understand the logic behind it. Can it ever be that God becomes pleased and His heart melts on seeing blood! I don't think there is any purpose served by sacrificing animals or humans. It is the ego which has to be sacrificed. Ego is the animal which says, "Me, me, me" all the time. The animal which has to be sacrificed is the goat named ego. The actual sacrifice is the surrender of one's ego. The sacrifice of a goat or a lamb represents the ego. The sacrifice of ego is most important, because that is the barrier between myself and Himself. This is described in a verse as follows:

*Maina, the bird that sings, "Not me, not me", gets the reward;
While the goat that says, "Me, me, me", gets slaughtered.*

Conch and Shaligram

The conch and the shaligram are both very dear to Vaishnavites. Devotees of Vishnu do not eat meat or even onion or garlic, but they put to their lips the bone of a snail which is called a conch. It is a kind of animal which lives in water and this stone is its internal skeleton. They dip a grass resembling wild tulsi in the water and the creature comes up, attracted by the smell. When it comes to the surface, they catch it with a net, dry it and peel away the skin down to the bone. The shaligram is the inner shell of another aquatic animal. There are many varieties bearing such marks as Vishnu, the conch, the lotus, the kundalini chakras. It is found only in the bed of the Gandaki river at Muktinath in Nepal. This place is situated at a very high altitude and you have to cross difficult terrain to reach it.

Now a plane service for tourists has been started but I went there by foot. At that time the government of Nepal used to arrange food, fuel and chillum for the wandering sadhus. It was a very high quality chillum. At night we would make a dhuni and sing. As we smoked the chillum we felt high and, from those heights, the world seemed to be left far below. There is a government tax on the shaligram if you bring it out of the country. The authentic shaligram has a small golden ring which the customs officers remove before giving it to you. Just as Shaivites worship the shivalingam,

the shaligram is worshipped by followers of Vishnu. There are many types and qualities of shaligram, but the authentic shaligram has a ring of gold.

It is an irony that Vaishnavites never eat onion and garlic, and do not even want to hear the word meat, yet the two objects most highly revered amongst them are the bones of snails: one which is called a conch and the other shaligram. Why and how did this happen? This is the virtue of good company. Since the conch is held in the hands of Lord Vishnu, it became an object of worship for the Vaishnavites, not because it is the bone of a snail. Whatever is held in God's hands becomes sacred. That means that through satsang even the most inferior and most inauspicious people become auspicious and fit to be worshipped. This is the Vaishnava aspect, but in tantra the conch has another value.

The *dakshinamukhi*, south-faced or reverse coiled conch, is important in tantra. Nobody can keep the dakshinamukhi conch without the full ritual worship and without matching the planetary constellations and zodiac signs, except sannyasins. Sannyasins here means only paramahamsas, not every person initiated into sannyasa. Therefore, I have many such conches. People who find these conches cannot keep them because of the astrological mismatch, so they give them to me. They are used for tantric rituals, and the how and why of these rituals is not to be disclosed. The people who have them in their homes might have inherited them from their forefathers who were tantric sadhakas. The tantric sadhakas may be householders or sannyasins.

The sadhana of tantra is considered to be very secret. Just like you keep your money and gold hidden and nobody knows about it, in the same way, tantric sadhana is kept secret and never disclosed to anyone. Sadhakas may worship, recite mantra and offer water to the shivalingam in public, but the real sadhana of tantra is secret. It may be any form of tantra, but it is always kept very secret. This is also said in the *Gita*, when Lord Krishna tells Arjuna, "Whatever I have told you is not only secret, but the secret of secrets." Think about it.

What is the secret of the *Gita*? Everything is written clearly in black and white, but only certain people can perceive the hidden meaning; normal people cannot.

Every science has secret codes. For example, if you want to access the information in my computer you must know the secret code. Even the nuclear bomb has a secret code and the president who is in power holds the key, the secret code. That code is kept secret so that unqualified persons are not able to use it. Similarly, the practices of tantra are not for everyone. Some practices are for ordinary householders and some are for special householders, because even among householders you find special people. There are righteous and crooked people, there are uncontrolled and self-restrained people as well. Therefore, to avoid undeserving people getting access to it, the practices are kept secret.

Tantric Initiation

Tantra is always secret. The tradition and processes of initiation are never written down on paper. The entire tradition is oral. The guru informs his/her disciple orally and then the knowledge is passed on to the next generation. Books just mention peripheral details. They are mere essays, you will not find any guidance in them. Not everybody is accepted in the rite of tantric initiation. You may wish to be accepted, and who doesn't, but despite this you may not get it, because the basis, the foundation of the sadhaka who wishes to practise tantra must be very strong. If you want to build a multistorey building, you need a strong foundation. In the same way, if you want to go into the path of tantra, you need a strong foundation. Just because you want to practise tantra, that alone does not make you qualified.

What is meant by a strong foundation? It means that body, mind, intellect, samskaras and everything should be strong. If there is a fault in your car at any point, then the vehicle will break down. Therefore, the path of tantra is not for self-important people or for those who are frail and fearful. It is not for people who lack self-restraint and forbearance. Those who want to practise tantra should not search for a guru. First, they should strengthen themselves physically, mentally and intellectually. Do you know the story of the great yogi Milarepa? His guru's guru was an acharya

of Nalanda. Nalanda was a renowned university near Rajgir. His relationship with his guru was a unique one. The stories about Milarepa tell how hard his sadhana was and how much pain he had to bear in order to become fit to practise tantra. In the same way there are stories of many sadhakas like this.

Secret knowledge

In the *Gita* (18:63) Lord Krishna tells Arjuna: “Thus has wisdom, more secret than secrecy itself, been declared to you by me. Having reflected over it fully, then do as you wish.” The knowledge of eighteen types of yoga was given to Arjuna in the eighteen chapters of the *Gita*. It begins with the yoga of depression, then comes samkhya yoga, karma yoga and so on. At the end comes the yoga of liberation through renunciation of action, *moksha karma sannyasa yoga*, and what was secret about it is something which we have to understand. Most interpretations of the *Gita* are philosophical, but in the 18th chapter, almost at the end of the *Gita*, Krishna says, “O Arjuna, so I have explained to you the knowledge which is the secret of all secrets.” Why did he use the words “secret of secrets”?

What is the definition of secret? Secret means not known to anybody else. It is not sacred, it is secret, not known. If I tell you something secretly, what does it mean? It means that your wife doesn't know about it. If I tell her something secretly, that means you don't know it. So, if Krishna tells Arjuna the secret of secrets, it means nobody else knows. He has particularly used the words, “secret of secrets”, top secret. I am asking, what is that top secret in the *Gita*? By explaining the *Gita* philosophically as Shankara, Ramanuja, Radhakrishna, Swami Sivananda and other teachers have explained it in hundreds of commentaries, you will find nothing secret. Everything is open, which means the *Gita* has an underground meaning.

Besides the philosophical interpretations, there is an underground, secret meaning, a hidden interpretation, and that is tantric. If you understand and accept that the *Gita* is a

tantric text revealed to Arjuna in the middle of the battlefield, then what is that tantric process? Then the *Gita* will have to be reinterpreted in the light of tantra, not merely *Dvaita*, *Advaita* or *Vishishtadvaita*. So far, no one has interpreted the *Gita* along the lines of tantra. They have gone as far as yoga. Bhupendra Nath Sanyal has explained it on the basis of yoga, Shankara according to Advaita Vedanta, Ramanuja according to Vishishtadvaita. They have all given their interpretations, but no one has yet done a tantric interpretation.

Meaning of shaktipat

Sanjaya, the commentator on the *Mahabharata* war, obtained divine vision from Sage Vyasa and thereby narrated the whole story to Dhritarashtra, while sitting in his assembly. In the same way, man has an inner eye in addition to these two eyes, which is called the third eye. The inner eye is not related to the body but to the consciousness. It means the vision of the inner self which is obtained by the grace of guru and God. Similarly, there are many strange terms in the tantric tradition. One is *shaktipat* and the synonym for that is *anugraha*. This is found in tantra shastra and it means that the guru touches the disciple with his *shakti*, his energy. The word *pat* means 'transmission'. So the guru touches the disciple in order to transmit his energy and this is called shaktipat. It means, for example, that I illuminate you with a torchlight and see you with my eyes.

Now how does the normal process of seeing happen? The light reflected from your body enters my eyes and reaches the brain which reconstructs your image. My eyes did not go to you, neither did you come inside me, but I saw you. What does that mean? Are you seen there or here, outside or inside? In that process, you are really the object of perception. Then is the perception taking place on the object or is the perception taking place in the perceiver? It is happening here in the perceiver. The perceiver is seeing the object within him and obtaining its experience. What happens in shaktipat is that the guru enters the disciple in

the form of a vision inside him. There, the guru is not the seer, but the disciple becomes the seer. He perceives the guru inside himself and that is called shaktipat. I am telling you this from my experience.

How it happens

The one who gave this experience to me did not tell me how it happens, but it is something like strong hypnosis. I am using the word hypnosis because I have no other word for it. The disciple goes under a spell and the mind is taken away. After that, the guru injects his experiences within the disciple or stimulates the experiences of the disciple's own personality. Either the experiences are induced or they are stimulated. At that time the disciple has experiences of the void, space, colours, lights, or of fearsome beings with frightening faces which are called demons or ghouls. All these things happen. Many times there is fear and the sadhaka screams, he suffers pain. This has been described by many saints in Christian literature. One saint wrote that he experienced intense pain in his body, he shouted and screamed, he felt intense fear, intense burning, as if he was in flames. These experiences are those at the level of soul. They come from the innermost mind, from the core of antah karana.

I will tell you a true story as an example. There was a young man in Munger. I had good relations with his family, and they had considerable status in society. That man was well-built, around thirty years of age. He used to say, "Something is biting my ear." "What?" I asked him, One day he said to me, "Look, an insect is crawling up my ear and biting me." He was having an illusion, a hallucination. I could not see the insect, but he was having the experience and he could see it. You call that an hallucination. Isn't hallucination an inner experience? But what is the basis of that experience? The inner mind, antah karana, is the basis of that experience. If you don't have a mind, then illusion or hallucination cannot take place. With the mind as the basis, the experience of an insect bite was happening.

This is a gross example of a symptom of psychosis, or madness, but the same kind of experience can arise from the depths of your psyche. For example, when Akrura went for a bath in the river Yamuna on his way to Mathura he experienced the presence of Lord Krishna. Similarly, when Krishna's mother, Yashoda, asked baby Krishna to open his mouth to see if he was eating mud, she saw the entire cosmos inside. What was that experience? Did it take place inside Krishna's mouth or inside Yashoda's mind? This question as to whether the experience of Yashoda was subjective or objective is unanswerable, mysterious and indescribable. Was that cosmic form in the mouth of Krishna or in the mind of Yashoda? If that experience was in Yashoda's mind, someone must have infused or induced it.

In the same way the experience of Kaushalya, Rama's mother, is mentioned in *Ramacharitamanas*. She saw her son everywhere. When Kaushalya entered the room, she saw her son Rama sleeping in one place, then she looked around and saw him sleeping in another place and then in another; she saw him everywhere. At first she got scared, then she experienced the cosmic form of Lord Vishnu. What was this experience? Did Rama induce this experience in Kaushalya? Did Krishna give it to Yashoda? What was the nature of this experience? Was it subjective or objective? Here, while in a special state of consciousness, when the 'mirror' is cleaned, a person sees the real image in that mirror, the reflection of reality.

Cosmic experience

This consciousness of ours is enveloped in darkness. Everywhere the curtains of ignorance are drawn. Similarly, Kabir has said:

*In this pitcher seven oceans exist,
Some are sweet, some are salty.
In this pitcher a million jewels exist,
Some are emeralds, some are diamonds
But everything is clouded in pitch black darkness.*

All around there is a shell, inside that is the pitcher, the space that exists within this pitcher is absolute void. The people who try to reach this void fail most of the time. Occasionally one finds a guru like Krishna, who tells Arjuna: “I give you the divine eye; look at my divine form.” (*Gita* 11:8) So, that experience was induced by Krishna, which means he gave shaktipat to Arjuna. This experience is described in the 11th chapter of the *Gita*. The cosmic form of Lord Krishna is described with thousands of faces and all the events of the universe happening within them. That was an experience.

After having that experience, Arjuna got frightened. There is intense fear during such experiences. When I was given these experiences by my teacher, she said, “You shout a lot.” I said, “I am a novice, I don’t understand anything. I don’t shout unless I feel fear. I am afraid because I feel someone is killing me.” Even in a dream, if somebody comes to kill you with a knife, you shout. The impulse of suffering that penetrates the consciousness raises a cry and the person screams. Just like one screams in a bad dream, Arjuna screamed, “No, no, I don’t want to see all this. Take it away! I don’t want to see your thousands of mouths, thousands of noses and thousands of arms. I want to see your form which has four arms, beautiful face and eyes, necklaces and ornaments of gold and silver, studded with diamonds.” We are capable of seeing this form because it is beautiful. But those forms with faces having one long tooth hanging, a snake dangling down, on this side a dinosaur is moving, on that side flames are rising, on one side a river is flowing, on that side trees are burning – no, we don’t understand these forms and we cannot bear to see them.

Arjuna implored Lord Krishna: “Having seen Thy immeasurable form with many mouths and eyes, O mighty-armed one, with many limbs, with many stomachs and fearful with many teeth – the worlds are terrified and so am I. On seeing Thy cosmic form touching the sky, shining in many colours, with mouths wide open, with large fiery eyes, I am terrified at heart and find neither courage nor peace, O

Vishnu. Having seen Thy mouths, fearful with teeth blazing like the fires of cosmic dissolution, I know not the four quarters, nor do I find peace. Have mercy, O Lord of the gods, O Abode of the universe. (*Gita* 11:23–25)

Arjuna said: “I am afraid, my body is shaking, I can’t tolerate this experience. Lord, please take away this form, please remove it. I love to see thy beautiful form. Whatever I have said presumptuously, from carelessness or love, addressing Thee as, ‘O Krishna! O Yadava! O Friend,’ regarding Thee merely as a friend, unknowing of this Thy greatness, in whatever way I may have insulted Thee for the sake of fun, while at play, resting, sitting, at meals, when alone with Thee, O Krishna, or in company, that I implore Thee, immeasurable one, to forgive. I am delighted, having seen what has never been seen before, and yet my mind is distressed with fear. Show me that previous form only. O God, have mercy, O God of gods, O Abode of the universe.” (*Gita* 11:41, 42, 45)

Then the Lord manifested his normal form in front of Arjuna and he regained his breath. This is a very big incidence of anugraha, grace. A similar event happens between guru and disciple also. There have been saints, not all, but a few, once in a while, who have received this grace.

Swamiji, who was Sanjaya? What was his character and role in the Gita?

He was the chariot driver of the King of Hastinapur in the court of Dhritarashtra. Before him, Karna’s foster father was the charioteer of the king. After his retirement Sanjaya became the charioteer. In those days the charioteer used to be the permanent secretary of the king. He was very knowledgeable, wise and understanding because he had to drive the king into battle. He had to understand everything, he had to be with the king all the time. If the charioteer deceived the king, then he was gone forever. Therefore, he was a person who was highly trusted. So Sanjaya was the charioteer of the king.

What is the tantric interpretation of the Gita?

I will tell you when I interpret the *Gita* in the light of tantra. This doesn't mean that what occurred was not history. We accept that Lord Krishna and Arjuna were living figures and that the *Mahabharata* was a reality. In that respect, a few important things are to be noted: i) the battlefield of Kurukshetra, ii) the relationship between the Kauravas and the Pandavas who were cousins and iii) the chariot of Arjuna which was pulled by white horses and commanded by Lord Krishna. Hanuman was on the flag of Arjuna's chariot. All these are important factors which will have to be explained first, before the tantric explanation can be given.

What are the pandits chanting?

The pandits are chanting mantras from the Vedas. The long chantings were from *Sama Veda*, the Veda which has music. This chanting is from *Yajur Veda*. The mantras with fast pronunciation and fast chanting are from *Rig Veda*. The four pandits or brahmins represent the four Vedas. Each one is a scholar in *Rig Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Sama Veda* and *Atharva Veda*. They have installed the mandala of Devi in the mandap. First they took my permission and then they established *lokapals* in the corners. It is strictly tantric worship, which means that all these practices are done in order to awaken the inner power, the inner shakti.

Sankalpa of Second Generation

Swami Niranjan: I would like to introduce you to Srikant Goenka, your host at Rikhia, who has invited all of you here to participate in the Sat Chandi Maha Yajna. He belongs to the second generation. The first generation are all sitting and the second generation are all standing.

Sri Swamiji: Swami Niranjan's generation is the second, mine is the first. All of us from the first generation have retired. Swami Niranjan has retired us by talking nicely and sweetly.

Swami Niranjan: The people of the second generation have only one sankalpa: to go in whatever direction our Guruji leads us without any thinking or headtrips. Our sankalpa is to keep on walking, and Srikant is an inspiration to all young people. You people complain a lot, "Our son is going the wrong way, he is like this and that." Srikant can be an example for the new generation that they should not only be proficient in their karma, but also proficient in their dharma. Today in this Maha Yajna he is your host and you are his guests.

Sri Swamiji: The Goenka family will be remembered as the patrons of a great cause, like Maharana Pratap, who is remembered in Indian history even today. They have been with me right from the very beginning when Bihar School of Yoga was born. And even today, when Bihar Yoga Bharati,

the first Yoga university, has been conceived by Swami Niranjan, they are still with me. Bihar Yoga Bharati was inaugurated at a very auspicious time in history. Therefore, things happened automatically, and, in retrospect, we realize that many great events have taken place on that date.

Swami Niranjan: The second generation of yoga is functioning now. The first generation worked under the directions of our guruji, Swami Satyananda. Now is the time for the second generation to come into play. There is a sankalpa which we have to take. It is a sugar-coated pill, which will definitely guide us through our life. The sankalpa, or resolve, of the members of the second generation is to find their own way through their own efforts, and to offer their services to the guru and to mankind. We need not follow the footsteps of others. Footsteps are left behind by donkeys, dogs, human beings and gods as well. How can we differentiate and recognize which footstep belongs to a donkey, a dog, a human being or a god? Our guruji has given us an *adesha*, an order, and it is our dharma to obey it until the end.

Therefore, having surrendered themselves completely at the guru's feet, this new generation will discover their own way, make their own way by their own effort. I offer an open invitation to whoever wants to join in this work of the new generation to come forward and take a sankalpa during this auspicious occasion of Sat Chandi Maha Yajna. The sankalpa is to surrender to the guru and help in his mission, from the depths of your heart, to apply your mental faculties fully for spreading the guru's light from door to door.

The tantric initiation which is being given here is a very special initiation in the sense that the blessings of the Divine Mother are being received and will be received by all of us in different ways, in different forms. And tomorrow is the most important part of the ceremony, *kumari poojan* or the worship of nine virgins.

Succession

Swami Niranjan has taken over all my spiritual responsibilities. In 1983 he took over the institutional responsibilities from me. To look after the spiritual life of the disciples, it is not enough to be just a yoga teacher. Besides teaching asana and pranayama, you also have to give them some insight into spiritual life. For that one needs a very solid background. Study of the scriptures and philosophy is not enough; one must have something within him, and for that the initiation has to be imparted.

Swami Niranjan first went through sannyasa initiation when he was ten years old. Now he is undergoing the tantric initiation and I am transferring what I have to him, because what I have to transfer cannot be done through verbal education. It is a tantric initiation, a transfer, and this Chandi Yajna is intended for that purpose. Therefore, we had to bring in these pandits who have been conducting this yajna. Although tantric initiation is secret, it is not secret in the sense that it is done in a closed room. When I say 'secret', I mean that I am initiating Swami Niranjan but it is an open secret! I am initiating him through a secret process but as all of you are witness to it the secret is an open secret.

Tantric initiation doesn't mean that you shut yourself in the room with a wine bottle in your hand and drink. That concept is something the scholars must get out of

their heads! Tantric initiation is a very pure initiation. Of course, a student of tantra may drink or eat meat if he likes, who cares! However, tantric initiation goes through an indescribable process of pooja, mantra and kriya. Swami Niranjan is now receiving the tantric initiation from me, because what God and guru have given me was all received by transmission. I received the blessings of my guru and of God not by verbal exchange. I just got them through transmission. Similarly, Swami Niranjan will get them and then he becomes guru

So far he is only a teacher. There is a difference between a guru and a teacher. Who can help you to remove the covering of darkness? When you close your eyes there is total darkness. When you go deep into your mind, the path is uncharted. You don't know which way your consciousness will go, because nobody has any chart of that plane of unconscious. There is only guru who can help. Swami Niranjan is getting ready for this and then I become free. Once I become free, I want to leave, because I have no interest in living in this 1923 model. What is the fun of living in this old model: wasting time, wasting food, wasting money. If I have a new model, that will be nice. I'll be born, I'll grow up, I'll be educated.

However, if I am born my life will be for others and not for myself! I don't want to live for my wife and child or for my parents, because there are millions of people all over the world who need help. Governments and politicians can't help the needy. It is the people who have to help the people, and one has to fulfil the obligations to the society in which one lives. Everyone has a dharma to fulfil for the society. A sannyasin has a duty to the society. Sannyasins will have to help uplift the people. What comes to me is not mine; I am a channel. I decided that this Sat Chandi Maha Yajna should be organized because people have been asking me for guidance. Although I have repeatedly said, "Please do not come to me, I do not want to talk," still people keep asking. They write letters, they telephone and

leave messages. I do not want to guide anyone spiritually. I do not want to talk, I do not want to explain. I just want to enter into total silence.

Society, friendship and love mean nothing to me. I have had enough of it. There is a time when a man should not need them. Moreover, that is also the dharma of a paramahansa. I want to enter into deep silence and I have come to this place for that. I have not created an ashram here and I don't want this place to develop into an ashram. Therefore, Swami Niranjan has taken over the spiritual charge from me and now he has to become a global man. For that, knowledge of classical yoga is not enough. A guru has to be able to impart spiritual power to his disciples. For this he is undergoing initiation at this tantric ceremony of Sat Chandi Maha Yajna.

The initiation which I am now imparting to Swami Niranjan is not a verbal transmission; it is not instruction. When love is transmitted between a boy and girl, when he looks at her and she looks at him and they fall in love, what happens between them? He has not spoken anything to her, so what happens? That is transmission, psychic transmission, devotional transmission, transmission of affection. Hatred and jealousy are also transmitted in the same way. This initiation is called psychic transmission and all the rituals are intended for that purpose. This is shaktipat. It is very easy for anyone to say, "Swamiji, give me shaktipat." But what have you done to deserve shaktipat? What about my relationship with you? How do we vibrate together? I don't even know what your bank balance is, so how do I know what is hidden in your heart?

If you can't give me a blank cheque, how can you give me your heart? You can't give me a blank cheque because you think that I will withdraw all your money. You can't give me your heart because you think I'll misuse you, exploit you. Therefore, those who seek shaktipat or transmission from me should also know what they have to give me. They have to give me everything. Niranjan has given me everything. He

has given me his youth, his future, his entire life. He came to me at the age of four. He has no wife, no child, no bank balance, no property, no ambition and no desire, except service, seva. When you renounce everything and go to the guru's fold, then guru considers and cares about the disciple. You have a bank account, but I don't know how much is in it. So how will I know about your heart? How will I know what is in it?

I have made no other choice. I am clear on this matter. There should be no confusion about my successor. Swami Niranjan is my successor. I don't want any confusion at all, and we all wish that his sadhana becomes successful.

Kumari Poojan

One thousand names of Lalita are chanted every afternoon in the pooja mandap and different things are offered to the Goddess. We chant one thousand times, “To the dispeller of darkness I offer this; dispeller of ignorance, salutations; giver of mercy and plenty, prostrations; oh Thou, the light of all hearts, prostrations . . .” Everyday one type of item is offered. Yesterday it was cardamom, the day before yesterday it was almonds, before that black sesame seeds. Today the offering will be hibiscus flowers, one thousand in number. We say the name and attributes of Devi, “namah”, “I prostrate”, and then make the offering one thousand times. At that time I sit there.

In the evening special dishes are offered to Devi. The plates are brought and served to her at night. After that, the plates come to me, but I don’t eat in the evening; it is my rule. So I just touch it and then Swami Niranjan takes it. For nine days he is having royal dishes served on silver plates with silver cup and glass.

The day after tomorrow will be the worship of kanya. Just as you have the Virgin Mary in Christianity, we call her Kanya Kumari. Cape Comorin, a place at the southern tip of India, is also known as Kanya Kumari. Kanya Kumari is the concept of Devi as a young girl before puberty. The day after tomorrow will be the completion of Swami Niranjan’s

initiation into the tradition of tantra, when he will wash the feet of the nine virgins and receive their blessings. Christ received the blessings of the Virgin Mary. Swami Niranjan will also receive the blessings of the Virgin Mary in nine forms. That will be the completion of this tantric initiation. After that, everybody can return home, remembering this wonderful event.

On the last day of the Sat Chandi Maha Yajna there will be *havan*, offering of oblations, and feeding of the nine virgins, all nine years of age. In India we consider the official age for virginity to be nine years. After nine years they become girls and are called *kanya*, meaning 'virgin'. These nine virgins will be dressed and fed, and their feet will be washed, superimposing the concept of Devi on them. I have performed this worship at Kamakhya in Assam, which is the foremost *shaktipeetha* in India. Before coming to Rikhia, I performed *kanya pooja*, fed her and even washed her feet. That is what we will be doing here. Along with *kanya pooja*, this year I have added a new item, the worship of the daughter-in-law, the married woman who is in the prime of her youth.

The concept of *kumari* or virgin is also found in Christianity. Mary was a virgin, and although she had a child, still she was believed to be a virgin. According to vedic astrology, there are thirty-six qualities of a girl. At the time of marriage these qualities are matched with those of the boy. Some of their qualities may match and others may not. The most important quality is the structure of the *yonis*, the reproductive system. Not every unmarried girl is a *kanya*. Her *yonis*, or reproductive system, may not match this quality. Mary was a virgin, even though she was a mother, because of the basic quality of her *yonis*. There are particular qualities in females that belong to a virgin. Even if she becomes a mother, the quality of the reproductive system is still called *kanya*.

Out of the thirty-six qualities of a female, one is the quality of the *yonis*. The *yonis* is the place where generation

and birth takes place. In English, the word yoni is called vagina, but in Sanskrit it is the place where generation takes place. There must be a yoni, a place of generation, for the whole universe also. The endless galaxies, millions and trillions of stars, the infinite skies, everything has a place of birth, a place where they emerge from the unmanifest. That is called the yoni.

There are females who are virgin by nature, and it is they who come for sannyasa. Not everybody thinks of sannyasa. This is a subject of vedic astrology. In India, the matching of a boy and girl takes place before marriage amongst Hindus. While matching the qualities, they are very particular that the girl has a proper yoni, so that she can be used for reproduction. If the yoni of the girl is that of a sannyasin, she will be useless for family life. Such a girl, whose yoni marks her to be a sannyasin will be indifferent to household duties. She will follow that life, but not with gusto, passion or heat. If somehow she gets out of it, she will be happier.

In England a priest had raised certain questions about the authenticity of the Virgin Mary, and the Christian church was unable to give a proper reply. I was reading the report where he asked how Mary could be a virgin and I said, "These priests relate everything to sexual life. How can virginity be related only to that?" Virginity is a natural quality that belongs to one's genetic structure. I am a celibate because that is my nature. Even if I have had an interaction with a woman, it doesn't change my nature, my DNA structure, which is my genetic personality. This also applies to many others. This is the meaning of virginity, and one should study that part of vedic astrology.

Therefore, every nine-year-old girl in the street cannot be taken for worship as a kanya kumari. A young girl may be a virgin in the sense that she has not menstruated or had sexual interaction, but that alone is not virginity. Virginity is a basic and special quality in relation to her reproductive system. This basic quality of the yoni will have to be explained. The basic quality of a yoni is its inherent quality

and that remains even if the girl is married and gives birth to a child. Then, even after becoming a mother, she feels like adopting sannyasa and living in solitude. This thought does come to the minds of some women. So, this is actually called *kanya kumari*, the real virgin.

Tomorrow the kanyas will be worshipped here and they will bless Swami Niranjan. A virgin can always bless a sannyasin and give him the touch of divinity, whether she be Virgin Mary or any other virgin. In reality, she is a virgin who has the basic quality of a virgin, who has the divine grace of a virgin, and she can always give blessings. For this reason, she is used in tantric ceremonies. Tomorrow Swami Niranjan's tantric initiation will come to a point of termination where he will have to worship the kanyas, give them a bath, wash their feet and feed them. So it is a very auspicious day.

Initiation Ceremony

Now the havan is going to begin. Havan is the fire ceremony which concludes the yajna. In order to light the fire for the yajna, the mantras to revive Agni are being chanted. Then by rubbing two wooden sticks together to create friction, the fire will be lit. That is called *agni manthan*, churning the fire sticks. Two sticks of wood are churned along with the chanting of mantras and so the fire is created. With that fire the yajna is about to start. You should not forget to see Devi. She is reclining among one thousand lotus flowers in yoga nidra. Isn't she beautiful? I was smiling and saying to her, "Look here, allow me to shampoo your feet."

Two different aspects of mind, the higher and the lower, are represented by the two sticks rubbing each other. When you churn the mind, the fire of jnana is born. Dhyana is the process of churning the two aspects of mind. Churn them and then only the sins are burnt. The fire of jnana which is created by the process of churning burns away all the sins of the personality. The ceremonial fire has been lit. Whatever is happening here is happening with His wish. This is not an ordinary event. Many obstructions usually come in the way of such ceremonies, but not even a single obstacle has come in the way of this one. For three days clouds have hovered over this place. I was prepared to protect the place from rains, but all the clouds blew away towards the East.

The exactitude needed in this type of worship is absolute. Mantras and kriyas are used in this practice and both require total accuracy. If a mantra is mispronounced, the result might be a curse rather than a benediction. Therefore, the pandits must have perfect pronunciation. I have studied Sanskrit in South India, so I know the exact pronunciation, and I can say that their pronunciation is very good. The sound of Aim Hreem Kleem comes like the sound of a humming bee. This is the law of chanting – that it should be captivating. When someone chants vedic hymns, the listener should feel hypnotized. To chant the mantra in a captivating and hypnotizing manner is not easy. Special arrangements have to be made for that.

So, today Swami Niranjan has received his initiation. That initiation is now over. The Mother will be the witness and so will all of you. I am handing over to Swami Niranjan the two greatest assets of my tantric life, the sphatik mala and sphatik lingam. I feel assured that he will lead you all amidst the encircling gloom. Whenever there is darkness in your life and you forget the way, he is the one who can tell you where to go and what to do. Swami Niranjan began his twelve years in 1983 and now he has completed them. He has been with me since his birth, but in 1983 I handed over my succession to him, and now it is 1995. Twelve years have passed and he has proved himself. For those twelve years he has led a hard and strict life.

Most of the new Munger sannyasins don't know me. I am as fierce as Bholenath. I am not and never have been a sweet guru. Many disciples have failed because they thought, "What kind of a guru is he? Guru should not get angry, guru should not do this." But Swami Niranjan accepted me as I am. Unless a disciple accepts the guru as he is, there is no salvation and no way for him. You should not want the guru to adjust to your image. So, Swami Niranjan has come through with flying colours. It is not after guiding him that I nominated him. Before he was born, before his mother conceived him, I told his father and mother, "My successor

will be born through you.” Swami Dharmashakti gave birth to him and she is here today.

Today the Mother Goddess is the witness and all of you are the witnesses that I have handed over the two priceless treasures of my spiritual life to Swami Niranjan. One is a crystal mala and the other is the crystal lingam. Swami Niranjan has worked very hard. Generally, disciples want to see the guru in their self-created image. If this is the case, then the disciple becomes the guru and the guru becomes the disciple. But he never tried to see me in his image. He has always had the feeling, “Whatever you want me to do, I will do.” I have always been a tough guru, but Swami Niranjan accepted me as I was. If you really want to find your guru, you have to accept him in his true form. Once you have decided, “This person is my guru”, then you must accept him as he is. Try and mould yourself in his form, and do not mould him in your form.

It is very difficult to be a disciple. Nobody becomes a disciple simply by getting initiated or by smoking the pipe of the guru. When a carpenter wants to make something from a piece of wood, he envisions what he will shape and fashions it in his own way. The wood is cut, chiselled and filed, but it does not question the carpenter. Similarly, a piece of cloth does not question the tailor. Leather does not question the shoemaker. I appointed Swami Niranjan as my successor in 1983. Now his twelve years have been completed and I have handed over the sphatik mala and lingam to him. I have full faith that he will come as a divine light into your spiritual lives, and that you will receive everything from him.

Now I just want to rest here in peace. I do not want to meet people. This is a farewell party. There is no need to cheer and shout. Here we chant only God’s name. By shouting slogans, people raise the profile of gurus. I have lived a long life without any effort to make a profile, either high or low. I believe in having no profile. A true guru never makes any profile. Everybody wants high status, nobody low status. If you consider yourself to be the lowest of the low,

then you will rise to the greatest of heights. Nobody becomes a guru by rising high in the eyes of the public. Guru is not a social status.

Therefore, today we pray to Devi, to the Goddess, to the Mother, that she may make you into a medium for her expression, as she made me. I am now taking the connection wire from here and putting it into you. Now you remain in contact with the Mother and keep everybody else on the right path. Do it in your own way, not in my way. My way was the way of the staff. Guru and disciple both have their own natures.

Impressions

Swami Pragyamurti (England)

When the invitation to the yajna first arrived at Satyananda Yoga Centre in London, my immediate reaction was one of great joy at the prospect of seeing my beloved guru again. And as I continued to read, I was delighted to discover that this yajna was, in some way, celebrating the feminine, the Divine in its female aspect. As I had been planning to take six months away from the Centre, for myself, by myself, and prepare for the next decade and my progress towards 'Cronehood' – a kind of Menopausal Vision Quest – this invitation seemed to offer the perfect start to such a venture.

And I was not disappointed! However, it will take a long time to fully digest this experience and to assess the subtle yet powerful transformation that has surely taken place in all of us who were there.

At the time of writing, my mind is full of a myriad colourful images, dominated by red and pink and flowers and more flowers. And amongst the flowers, my Beloved, moving here and there; on one level aware of everything going on around him, talking, laughing, gesticulating, dancing, giving garlands, and on another level he was perhaps sitting on Mount Kailash, a million miles from Rikhia, perfectly still and at one with the universe. And when I looked at him and experienced his Shiva aspect, it was more than I could bear

and I had to close my eyes, only to be filled to overflowing with such intensity of feeling that I almost wished I could close my heart as easily as my eyes. And each day he continued to give me more and more and still more – I recall the sound of his voice calling my name, kneeling before him as he placed a garland of flowers around my neck, his wonderful satsang on women, his tenderness with the children as he drew them to him to join the dance, and on another occasion asking the women to join him as he danced the dance of Shiva, and, again his little conversations with his neighbours as they came forward, rather shyly, to receive their rickshaws, carts and bicycles – it was, and is, endless.

On many occasions I found myself wondering if the extraordinary diversity of people and their activities was a 'normal' part of a yajna? Are the local drummers always invited to add their heartbeat to the rather mechanical precision of the pandits' chanting? Are women and foreigners normally allowed to participate in the arati? And as Sri Swamiji himself explained, the presence of a young married woman at the Kanya Kumari Pooja was breaking new ground, making a very powerful statement to women in India and worldwide. What a beautiful ceremony that was, with the enchanting little girls in their colourful attire, their painted toes being tenderly washed and dried by the long, slim fingers of Swami Niranjana, their timidity gradually dissolving in the warmth of his smile, as he fulfilled his role with perfect naturalness and humility.

It seems to me that the underlying message of the yajna was that of oneness, unity in and through diversity. Ultimately we are all one, and on a practical, everyday level we can also function harmoniously together, treating each other with respect and affection, whatever the more orthodox folk may feel. And I pray that they will allow themselves to be touched by this message, and open up to the presence of the Divine in the whole human race, not just as a theory, but as a living reality.

Before coming to Rikhiya I had not realized that the yajna was also an important initiation for Swami Niranjana,

and amongst the many powerful and touching memories of him during those days, I would like to mention just two, which I hope will stay with me forever. I was privileged to be sitting nearby when Swami Niranjana did full pranama to his mother, Swami Dharmashakti, and to Swami Atmananda, in a gesture of such humility and tenderness that it took my breath away. And this was preceded by what I felt was the most beautiful, potent and extraordinary event of the whole yajna – when my beloved Swamiji handed over the symbols of his authority, the crystal ball and crystal mala, to my beloved Crown Prince. At this moment I finally understood that spiritually they are indeed one. And time stood still as a few tears slowly trickled down Swami Niranjana's cheeks, the only visible movement between them.

Swami Muktimurti (Australia)

The most significant part of the yajna for me was being in the presence of Sri Swamiji again. For many of us, particularly from the West, having heard stories of his life in seclusion and his concentration on his sadhana, it would be easy to imagine him as having become withdrawn and introspective. What I saw, however, was an incandescent fireball, fairly crackling with energy! He is the very embodiment of dynamism, still with his immense good humour and attention to detail, and awareness of the minutiae of our daily lives.

His energy seemed to affect everybody. Each morning, as all the helpers went about their duties in preparation for the day's program, nobody seemed to walk. Everybody ran! And not only that, they ran cheerfully!

Another source of inspiration was in watching Swami Niranjana at work. As the chief performer of the yajna, he was required to be present and active in all the many hours of pooja and ceremony involved in the yajna rites, and as well as that, he was working from before dawn to late at night each day, overseeing all the arrangements, carrying out his many duties, and acting as a Master of Ceremonies

in between parts of the program, providing bilingual explanations on what was happening. And somehow he seemed to find the time to also give personal attention to so many people. Never before have I seen such giving.

I had a similar impression of Swami Satsangi. She was everywhere at once, unfailing in her patience and care for people, whatever their backgrounds or their demands, tireless, friendly and always compassionate.

When the yajna was over and we had returned to Ganga Darshan, I felt that something in me had been profoundly changed, and when I looked at the faces of others who had been there, people from all over the world and from all walks of life, I could see that change reflected there too. It seems to me that all of us who had come together for this time, whether physically or in spirit, have been through a process of diksha. Perhaps you could say we have been splashed with the droplets from Swami Niranjan's diksha! And that is a transformative process which will manifest in some shape or form in the lives of each and every one of us in our vast, extended global family.

Swami Sureshwarananda (BSY)

History was made at Rikhia. A hundred years back Swami Vivekananda did Kanya Pooja at Kanya Kumari in secrecy. In this century it is the first time Kanya Pooja has been held, and in the tantric tradition this is the first time it has been held publicly. Vivekananda gave us the message of Vedanta, Swami Sivananda gave us the message of yoga, and Satyanandaji gave us the message of tantra. Vivekananda gave us the goal which we have to reach, Sivanandaji showed us the path which we have to walk, and now Sri Swamiji has accelerated the process by opening up the tantric practices to everyone. So history was made at Rikhia in the tantric tradition, in the spiritual tradition.

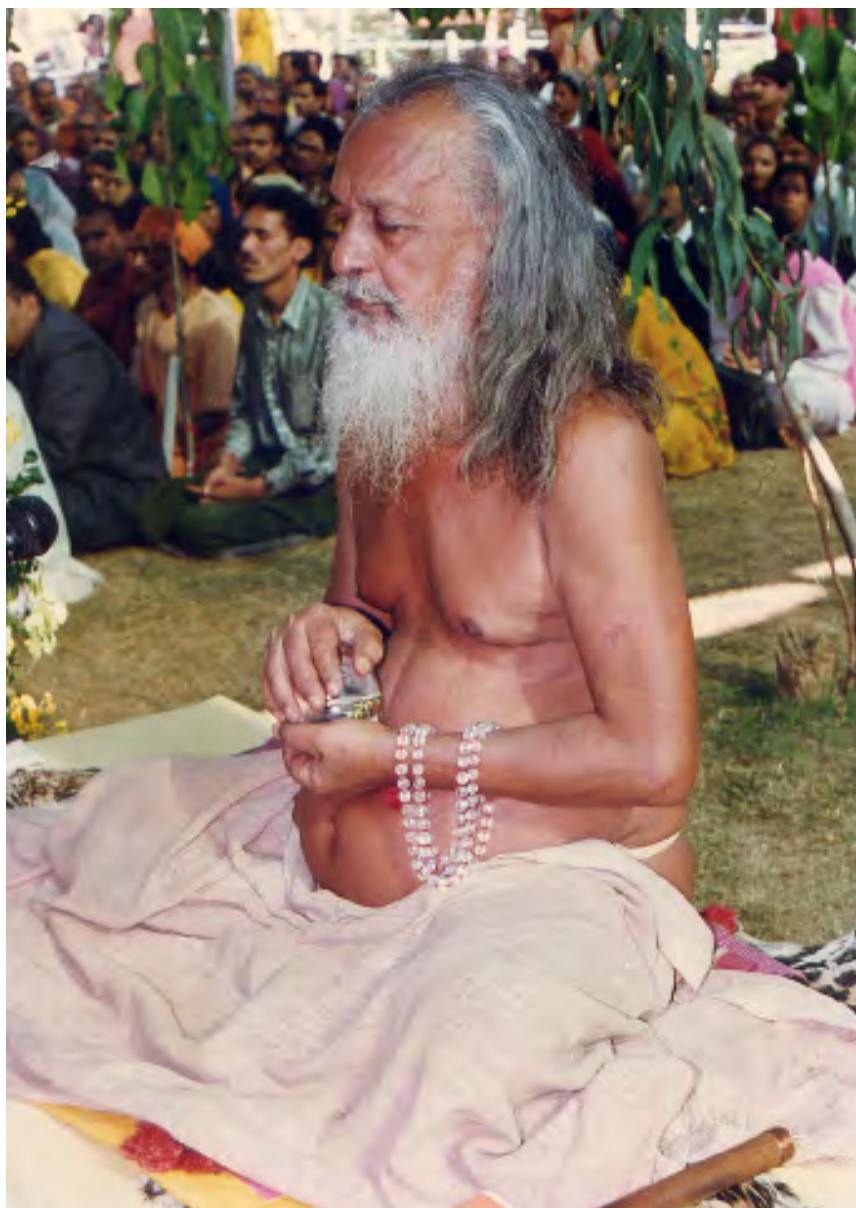
I was allocated a job in the yajnashala and as I am from South India, I was watching the pandits very closely. We have to give them full marks. One hundred percent perfection



View of the yajna venue



Kanya pooja



Sri Swamiji blessing the sphaatik lingam and mala



Sri Swamiji transfers his spiritual powers and responsibilities to his successor Swami Niranjan

should be there and the pandits followed all the rules and regulations meticulously. In South India the power of the Brahmins is very strong. Knowledge gives power and this power and authority can be misused. But the pandits who conducted this ceremony had not only knowledge and humility, but real wisdom.

In those few days I feel that Swami Satyanandaji gave us two things. One is the goal we have to reach. By rubbing two pieces of wood together, the fire is created with which we burn all our sins and in that fire we surrender our individuality. That is the real symbolism behind the yajna – surrendering ourselves totally. For that he also gave us a very simple sadhana: begin the day with ‘Sri Ram Jaya Ram’. It looks very simple but it is most difficult.

Sannyasi Achyutananda (England)

We arrived at Deoghar listless and tired, from all over the globe. None of us knew what we were coming to other than the Sat Chandi Maha Yajna, whatever that was! The next morning at seven-thirty we walked through the gates of the Akhara and sat down to be bathed for the next seven days in an incredible and unique experience.

In front of Ganesha Kutir another open-sided, thatched roofed kutir has been erected, and in the centre, a firepit or dhuni about five feet square, with the edge of the dhuni adjacent to Ganesha Kutir having a large vulva shaped carving on it. Opposite this, on the outside ‘wall’, is Chandi Devi, the murti, garlanded, clothed and glowing inside her own small house.

On the right of Chandi Devi sat the Brahmin priests, white clothed, upright, with bright shiny eyes, and amongst them the person being prepared to be the main poojari or performer of the worship, Swami Niranjanji.

On the first day, we all sat as the priests chanted mantras in perfect Sanskrit, and Swamiji performed rituals. This whole day was preparation; preparation of both Swamiji and the mandir. The next day we arrived at 8 am and sat

down in front of Sri Swamiji at the back of the Akhara for satsang until 10 am, when we left and did parikrama or circumnambulation of the mandir. We then went to Sivananda Math for darshan of Christ Kutir, a new kutir Sri Swamiji had built. Once outside the Akhara we walked down to where a large festival tent was erected and people were selling everything from malas to bananas!

At 2 pm we returned to the Akhara where the pandits continued chanting for an hour or so, followed by the divine voice of Krishna Devi, a renowned Indian singer and story teller. Kirtans from BSY swamis were sung until 5 pm when arati was performed of both Chandi Devi and Sri Swamiji.

Each day was attended by thousands of Indian nationals as well as at least 500 foreigners. Twenty-five litres of Ganga water, collected from Gangotri, were used in the pooja. Every morning fresh flowers were delivered from Calcutta by night train. This was no small affair! The whole event had the air of both a festival and a pooja, and that was only what we mere mortals could perceive.

During the satsangs Sri Swamiji talked of many things, such as the importance of bhakti – wake up with God's name and go to sleep with God's name. (To aid waking up with God's name, Sri Swamiji has a wake-up clock, that sings Rama kirtan!) He also talked of the phenomena of Ganesha drinking milk, and said it was a sign that a saint would be born, the saint of the next century. Just as Christ was born on the turn of the century and Buddha before him, so there would be a new saviour born. He talked of the importance of women and how they are to be worshipped and respected and how this whole pooja was for the Divine Mother. He spoke of how all religions are one and we should stop our petty sectarianism; it is of no importance if God is called Rama, Allah or Christ – we should unify. He said how the *Ramayana* had shown him bhakti – before, his understanding was just intellectual, but this book had awakened bhakti in him.

There was one important announcement, which was that Swami Niranjanananda is now receiving everything and

taking over from Sri Swamiji, who says that he now wishes to go into deep silence, not just for a week or a few months. Swami Niranjanananda is now the guru and the ceremony is a tantric ceremony to transfer the power to him. Just as Swami Sivananda transferred the power to Sri Swamiji, so he is transferring it to Swamiji.

This was the theme of the last day, where we fasted and watched as Swamiji worshipped nine young virgins and one newly-wed young woman; the pandits chanted and performed havan and then Sri Swamiji crowned his successor with his crystal mala and crystal shivalingam, which he had received from his female tantric guru. He declared Swamiji to have passed all the tests with flying colours and to be the new guru. Now Swami Niranjan will take spiritual charge and give people the inner guidance. Swamiji then prostrated before Sri Swamiji and his mother, who was sitting close by. This day ended with arati and prasad, with Sri Swamiji coming over and eating with us all and chucking us out when we had finished!

It is impossible to condense eight days of this calibre of experience into a few paragraphs; visions of Sri Swamiji dancing like Lord Shiva, local drummers joining in with the high caste Brahmins, swamis dancing to kirtan or bowing respectfully as they received garlands from Sri Swamiji, and there is always more to add. All of us who were there will have different memories, different images and hopefully this will just be one of a myriad of reports that will paint a picture for those unable to attend.

Sannyasi Rishiputra (Kolkata)

There were many memorable moments. One was the karma yoga. For the first time I experienced a sense of timelessness and desirelessness. By doing work for the guru to the best of one's ability, one can have this experience and feel blissful.

The classical vocal music on the first day was like a triveni, with the music in praise of the Mother, the blessings of the Mother and the blessings of Sri Swamiji. Pandit Jas

Raj, the vocal maestro, wanted to continue singing bhajans, and Swami Satsangi took us inside the Akhara. After some time I came out and looked around. Sri Swamiji saw me from a distance. I was standing in darkness, so he said, “Is that Rishiputra? What are you doing there?” He was not expecting me to be there in those quarters at that time. I said, “Swamiji, we are singing bhajans here in the Akhara.” He said, “You mean to say you are inside the Akhara?” “Yes,” I replied, and Sri Swamiji said instantly, “So you people have pacified my Akhara.” His love, his compassion and his greatness are without any bounds, without any limits.

Swami Devanath (France)

The most remarkable event of the yajna for me was the total presence of Sri Swamiji, my guru. For the last few years he has been a little inaccessible and unfamiliar. But this time he was absolutely, completely here with each one of us, no matter how unimportant. Dipping into his memory he recalled an anecdote, a name, a place. He had an ‘eye’ on everything – a chair for an old lady, toilets, a seat for everyone – and he supervised the whole ritual. I have seen my guru as a conductor of the symphony of life. The amazing and complex Devi worship unfolded like an ancient story, as if we were being projected into the memory of humanity. The adoration of the nine virgins was, for me, the shock between innocence and knowledge, learning and surrender. Sri Swamiji was like a firework exploding into a thousand stars, lively and joyful, deep and mysterious. It was a unique show.

Swami Vedantananda (England)

I came to the yajna quite open and without expectation, not having any idea what a Sat Chandi Maha Yajna would be except that it was the worship of God as the Cosmic Mother. It was a feast for all the senses, so much to see, hear, feel etc., and due to the absence of intellectual analysis, because for the most part we didn’t know what was happening, there was no mind, just the experience.

This experience is difficult to put into words as intellectualizing it cannot capture the feeling. I know that we were all privileged to be there and that we witnessed a piece of history that has touched us all on a deep level and will probably take years to ‘understand’.

As cultures ultimately reach their zenith and ultimately destroy themselves, it is the female aspect which recreates and renews. In our societies which have become dominated by the male left brain technologies this is a refreshing, if not a new thought and one that many of us will have become more aware of from being at the yajna. I think we will take back to our countries a more gentle approach to the feminine aspect from a softness that is coming from within.

One humorous impression, with a serious message, I take back is of Sri Swamiji first introducing us to his wake-up clock. The message was that instead of waking up in the morning and thinking, and I quote, “this bloody world”, we should wake up to the sound of God’s name, sit up and chant God’s name to start the day.

The second impression I take away is one of the most stunning images I have ever seen. On the penultimate evening at the end of the arati, Swamiji was standing behind Sri Swamiji. The scene was lit up in the darkness because it was being filmed. I have rarely seen them so physically close together and as I looked from one to the other, standing and sitting so still, so strong, with eyes closed, I felt there was no separation between them.

And the third image, which I will never forget, was when Sri Swamiji gave Swamiji the sphaatik mala and shivalingam. As Swamiji knelt in front of Sri Swamiji he had a look of total one-pointed devotion and dedication and this for me symbolized the essence of the guru-disciple relationship, service and sannyasa. As Swamiji continued to focus on him it felt as though he were seeing Sri Swamiji in more than just his physical form and it reminded me of that moment in the *Bhagavad Gita* when Krishna revealed himself to Arjuna in all his splendour. It was the most beautiful thing I have ever seen.

Swami Prakashananda (Germany)

Swamiji called us and many of us came, not having the faintest idea what we were going to experience during the eight intense days of the Sat Chandi Maha Yajna. We had been told that transmission of something very great was going to happen, but somehow I felt that there was much more behind the whole event than I could perceive. At times I feel that we have been witnesses of an event which will influence history into the next millennium.

Many times old childhood samskaras came up. My religious education was in a Protestant church and that means: a simple, clear, white stone building, without any decoration except the cross and white flowers; organ music and chorales with music of Bach. No bells, no wall paintings of saints, no Mary or other female beings, no processions. My programming was that the Catholics were not so sophisticated and needed that 'tingle-tangle', which was unnecessary for us.

Oh, how necessary it is to open the heart to the incomprehensible. The happenings in Rikhia were so completely opposite and today I can still recall many little moments and hear the chanting very clearly, especially "Aim Hreem Kleem, Aim Hreem Kleem", the beeja mantras for Saraswati, Lakshmi and Durga. However, to talk about these impressions is impossible for me. I have to assimilate, let it become one not only with my unconscious but with my whole being, so that knowing and understanding can arise from inside.

It was not only when the two great souls stood eye to eye with each other, or when Swami Niranjanji was lying flat in front of the virgins, or when my Guruji put beautiful malas around my neck that tears were flowing. The water taps opened many more times. Often I just stood up or bowed down, not with my old and pain tortured body, but internally, being ready to receive and fulfil whatever order I was given, with a sankalpa on my lips. However, even the word sankalpa obtained another meaning for me, reached another dimension.

I am pondering if it could have been an often open, often secretly repeated ancient ritual, which we, the people from the West, are ready to experience again, after a long time of ignorance? Have these rituals not also happened in our own culture, only that we have forgotten all about them? Do we have some role to play in the coming century, building a bridge and being a messenger between East and West and man and woman, between nations and races? These eight days may have been necessary for people like me to experience from the inside and not with the intellect. The whole process is not yet finished and I wonder how it will be when I have to resume my normal teaching with people who were not at the yajna? For them it is important to know that all the items which were brought from all over the world, from a small pen or toy to a cow or a rickshaw, were beautifully and perfectly organized and taken out into more than forty villages.

One picture will forever be in my heart and that is the last moment, when Swami Niranjanji stood in the glowing light behind Sri Swamiji, with the most beautiful mala all around, shining in copper gold, like the sun and the golden moon, the king of kings and the queen of queens.

And the question in my heart remains: Who are you? Two in one or one in two?

Swami Yogavijay (BSY)

Sri Swamiji made me a film maker at Rikhia. The experiences of a film maker are always subjective, never objective. Never before have I seen three such beautiful faces. There is no camera that can hold such pictures. There are no eyes that can behold such beautiful faces. One is of Sri Swamiji. I have seen every pore, every detail of his face, all the different expressions. And I have seen Swamiji in some very intense moments. I thought I also felt it sometimes. And the Devi – there was no statue, but it looked so alive that I can never forget it.

On the day when Sri Swamiji was garlanding the acharyas and senior swamis of the BSY family, he suddenly looked back and said, “Hey, how did I forget you. Come, come,

come.” Then he said to me, “Your heart is your camera and your two eyes are your lens. Whatever pictures you take, preserve them there.” It was a beautiful moment. He also blessed me, keeping his hand on my head.

But the spectacular thing was the shivalingam and the passing on of the crystal mala. Three years ago I had a dream that an unknown sadhu, a giant figure with a beard and hair, had passed on a similar lingam, a sphatik lingam with a tiny jyoti inside. When I told Swamiji about that experience he said, “You are lucky to have had the darshan of the Lord in that form.” I was really lucky to witness it for the second time.

Sri Swamiji was saying so many things but my mind had totally stopped. I had a similar experience in 1994 when I was filming the satsangs at Alakh Bara for a month, three feet away from Sri Swamiji, five hours a day, without moving much. But when people asked me later what he had said, I didn’t know. It really took a long time for me to come back. Even now I think I am there, not here.

As for taking a resolve, I forgot that we had to do so. I sat in front of the Devi every day, looking at her, getting spun out. I never knew what was going to happen next but something would prompt me to turn my head to the other side. I would see something interesting happening and run there with my camera.

We have been given a lot more than we could ever have expected. I have never received so much love in my life and I don’t know if I will ever receive it again. Irrespective of anyone’s status, Sri Swamiji gave everything to everybody. He tried to relate to everybody who came before him on their plane.

Swami Gyanprayag (Australia)

I think that everything I’ve experienced up to this point in my life was a preparation for what I experienced at the Chandi Yajna. It has changed my life and will probably continue to do so as I carry on my ashram life – just seeing Sri Swamiji in his relaxed fashion, Swami Niranjan going about his duties, flowing with the cosmic vibrations, and

everyone just melding in to form the whole event. We have all been affected in different ways and our awareness has been awakened to different levels. I feel privileged to be a part of this wonderful global family. As Sri Swamiji says, we're moving on now, we're in the second generation, we're looking for that new inspiration and drive. I feel that it's going to take a little time for me to come back to earth, settle and then go on steadily towards the new century. I feel very excited about this – we couldn't be in better hands.

Swami Vigyanchaitanya (BSY)

I was part of the organizing gang and it was my privilege to be working at close quarters with Sri Swamiji. While we were working he would give instructions and advice too. Some things really sank in. One day he said, "The aim is not to be precise, but to be perfect." I thought for some time about what on earth he meant. So it was a continuous satsang for us. I really don't know how much I have understood, but on a few occasions I could feel a thrill, especially when the yajna fire was lit. I could see how the fire was built up just by rubbing two pieces of wood together. The purity of that really struck me. When the shivalingam was given to Swamiji I felt a non-intellectual appreciation of what was happening. I earnestly feel that this is the time when I should make a sankalpa to make a change. I am a difficult person to change but now I think something should happen.

Swami Yogasagar (Australia)

Many times I witnessed Swami Niranjan receiving instructions from Sri Swamiji. I was amazed at the direct and often blunt way in which Gurudev spoke to Swamiji and very impressed by Swamiji's humility and willingness to serve. The guru-disciple relationship was a living reality. This impression also helped me to understand the directions and interactions Sri Swamiji had with us during morning satsang. His inclinations were very clear. Some senior swamis have become masters and not disciples. He said that he wanted

the same openness with us as he had with Swami Niranjan but this was not possible because of our self-importance. Sri Swamiji's instructions to the old generation to be re-initiated reflected his view that some swamis in senior positions were in danger of losing the quality of discipleship altogether.

It came to me as an inspiration and as a heartfelt truth that the symbolic structure of a yajna was in the form of a yantra, arranged into a mandala and empowered by mantra. I understood that as disciples and as an institution we are all part of an intricate yantra resembling on a larger scale the dimensions of a mandala. Every step in the yajna was of equal importance and interdependent for its success, as are we for our spiritual growth.

The Sat Chandi Maha Yajna created a reflective mood and I have begun to realize that the relationship I have with the Divine is very deep. The subtlety of awareness is more and more. As a sannyasin I may have a role to play but more important is that I remain fearless, humble and detached from the world and life. The events of the yajna were for me a deepening dedication to truth and dharma. May all of us who were there quickly transcend any identification of self-importance or seniority and re-engage ourselves in seva to the divine life.

Sannyasi Srimukhananda (Jaipur)

It was indeed a rare opportunity to spend ten days at Sri Panchdashnam Paramahansa Alakh Bara, Rikhia, Deoghar, during the Sat Chandi Maha Yajna from 23rd to 30th November, 1995. Those who participated in this unique and auspicious event from every nook and corner of India and abroad were blessed human beings.

As students of Bihar Yoga Bharati's pilot 4-month Certificate Course, we were privileged to be the first to arrive and the last to leave the venue of the Sat Chandi Maha Yajna every day. Equally rewarding was the fact that we had open and very close darshan of a Maharishi in the form of Paramahansa Satyanandaji from early morning until late in the evening.

On arrival at Alakh Bara on 22nd November at 3 pm, we saw the final touches being given to the pooja mandapam and the pandal under the direct guidance of Paramahansa Niranjanji (popularly known as Swamiji). As we entered the main gate, Swamiji's eagle eyes spotted us and we were introduced to Sri Swamiji, who was giving an informal satsang to devotees. He was his usual old self, frank, free and fearless in his expression, very practical in his outlook and approach to life and mixing readily and informally with the gathering. There were no self-created barriers between him and the devotees this time.

Throughout the yajna he could be seen and everywhere, wading through the crowd like a real avadhoota, in his majestic style. This was a sudden departure from his previous public appearances at Alakh Bara since 1989, but it was a welcome sign, appreciated by one and all. As Sri Swamiji himself says, "We sannyasins happen to be monarchs without crowns", and sure enough he is one such royal personality. Of course, he is on a different and much higher plane now, a step further in his spiritual attainments in the current incarnation. We could see, feel and experience his closeness to God Almighty. It goes without saying that he always was, is and will ever remain a monarch in our hearts. I wish we could tear open our hearts in the present Kaliyuga to prove the point like Hanuman did during his era.

Swamiji quickly briefed us about our karma yoga duties during this auspicious event. Sri Swamiji had already given us an indication by explaining the significance of looking after footwear, as Lord Krishna had done during the Rajasooya Yajna performed by the Pandavas during the *Mahabharata* period. Some of our duties were manning the shoe stall, guarding entry/exit points and sensitive strategic spots, and preparing and distributing prasad. Swamiji had asked us to report for duty at 6 am every day, and with my Forces background I ensured that as a well knit team, we reported five minutes early, never letting down Swamiji's confidence in us. True to teaching, theory was put into

practice and the first sutra of Sage Patanjali, 'Atha yoga anushasanam', yoga is discipline, was maintained by all the course students.

On D day, 23rd November 1995, the inaugural day, Swamiji directed us to set things in motion as quickly as possible. Greetings of 'Hari Om' learned at Ganga Darshan were soon transformed into 'Namo Narayana' at Rikhia Dham. Sri Swamiji's darshan gave us a boost for the entire day, and even Bholenath, in whom Sri Swamiji has invoked Bhairava, obliged us with his darshan. One can't take chances with him!

Devotees started pouring in. First the sannyasins from abroad, followed by those from ashrams and centres in India, then karma sannyasins, jignasus, other devotees and visitors. There were no VIP enclosures in the main pandal. Only Sri Swamiji's neighbours from Rikhia and nearby villages were accorded VIP treatment; there was a separate pandal for ladies and children and another for gents close to Sri Swamiji's raised platform, so the village folk could have closer darshan of Sri Swamiji, whom they reverently addressed as Babaji. He reminded us time and again that they were his neighbours, his near and dear ones, and as such deserved and were accorded real VIP treatment. We took his command in the right spirit and went a step further, raising their status from VIP to VVIP.

To compensate the foreign devotees in the main pandal, a garden swing was provided for Sri Swamiji. He made a point of satisfying everyone with his darshan, by positioning himself either on the swing or the platform, moving around the mandapam occasionally and even wading through the crowd at times. He gave open darshan to one and all.

All the arrangements were simply flawless, magnificent, considering the magnitude of the Maha Yajna. Swamiji's involvement could be felt everywhere, overseeing or conducting each and every ritual/event with perfection, despite being a Yajaman, chief performer of the yajna. And, of course, Swami Satsangi was hovering around here, there

and everywhere. One could see, feel and experience a real Kali or Chandi form in her black robe, as she moved about relentlessly, always on her toes, without any rest or relief. What a capacity for karma yoga she has!

A full complement of eleven learned pandits from Varanasi had been brought specifically to conduct the yajna. They were knowledgeable, eminent, expert in their field, having mastery over the tantric rituals pertaining to the special pooja required for this Sat Chandi Maha Yajna. They sought permission from Sri Swamiji to commence the pooja and started chanting the vedic mantras. Though the rituals were beyond our understanding, yet the mere sound of mantra chanting began working on everyone present. As the day progressed, manifestation of the powerful mantras had invoked and installed Lord Ganesha, the Divine Mother, along with other gods and goddesses. Intermittent chanting of the principal mantras 'Aim Hreem Kleem' created ripples in body, mind and soul. The gathering was almost hypnotized.

On the opening day we were also fortunate to see and hear the renowned vocal classical music maestro, Pandit Jas Raj, who enthralled the audience with his masterpieces in the afternoon. Around five p.m, arati, waving of lights to the Cosmic Mother, was performed, followed by distribution of prasad and flowers from the sacred pooja mandapam.

From the next day onwards Sri Swamiji gave morning satsang. He put us wise about the significance of organizing such a Maha Yajna: transferring his spiritual attainments to Swami Niranjanji, declaring him to be his successor, and guru to all of us on the global level; bringing gifts of all type for further distribution to his neighbours, and other practical aspects of life. Despite his total surrender to God as His servant and only bhakti pouring from his lips, I wonder if people can afford to look directly into his piercing, sparkling and twinkling eyes. Maybe a very few close disciples dare to do that. Sri Swamiji once again emphasized the need to perform our sacred duty or dharma towards society, especially the sannyasins, for the upliftment and wellbeing of the masses.

After performing parikrama of the pooja mandapam, people had prasad, a flower each and tilak from the vibhooti kalash brought from the sacred mandapam. In the afternoon there were bhajans and kirtans, then Smt. Krishna Devi entertained the gathering, narrating kathas or leelas from *Ramacharitamanas*. The entire crowd was spellbound. Then came the ceremonial arati, with all sanctity and devotion, followed by distribution of prasad, and dispersal of the huge crowd in an orderly manner.

By now the rhythm was set. Every day would commence with early morning cleaning; setting up for Sri Swamiji's satsang; witnessing the sacred pooja; chanting of the powerful mantras, especially the principal one 'Aim Hreem Kleem'; parikrama, prasad and rest for an hour. Afternoon sessions would invariably consist of bhajan and kirtan, followed by katha, arati, prasad and dispersal of the entire gathering. Sri Swamiji spoke daily on various topics, such as bhakti; Ganesha drinking milk; the role of females in yoga, tantra and society; householders and spiritual life; God; guru and disciple relationship, as well as giving lucid explanations of each and every event taking place, relating to practical life in a simple, straightforward, witty yet convincing manner, without mincing any words.

Ammaji, Swami Dharmashakti, the proud mother of Swami Niranjani and the first disciple of Sri Swamiji, arrived the very next day, and he offered her his raised platform. So now behold, to my right is Sri Swamiji in his avadhoota state as a Maharishi, to my left is Ammaji, true to her spiritual name Dharmashakti, and right in front is poojya Swami Niranjani, the chief performer of the Sat Chandi Maha Yajna. Do I seek any other boon from the Lord! All our wishes have been fulfilled with the grace of God and blessings of the guru.

The concluding day, Poornahuti, commenced with darshan, but there was something else in store for us today. We were privileged to witness Sri Swamiji perform Tandava Nritya, after having spoken about the dance competition between Lord Shiva and his consort Parvati; why Shiva is

known as Nataraj, the king of dancers; and why Parvati could not match her Lord in his typical Nataraj posture and had to finally surrender to the Supreme Consciousness in defeat. Everyone present joined in Sri Swamiji's Tandava and it was a real sight to behold. I wondered if we were in some other loka!

As I stood guard at my allotted place, sweet and vivid memories of the events of the past seven sacred days flashed through my mind. Sri Swamiji's satsangs conveyed his concrete views on faith, shraddha, shakti, devotion, surrender, maitri bhava, not having ill will against others; our attitude towards women as the real form of Mother, Shakti and Guru for the men; concepts of Shiva and Shakti, Purusha and Prakriti, Ardhanarishwara, and many of his other teachings were becoming clearer. I found myself wishing that Sri Swamiji would receive the mandate from his ishta devata to translate *Ramacharitamanas* into English as he had hinted.

Sri Swamiji and Swamiji explained the significance of Kanya Pooja (worship of the virgins), Poornahuti and connected events slated for the last day. Sri Swamiji again honoured the acharyas from different ashrams and yoga centres, his old disciples, eminent sannyasins and karma sannyasins from all over the world. This time he allowed the devotees to touch his feet. All these days we had been dissuading people from doing this. I couldn't help laughing to myself. Do such great saints and sages need our security and guarding! The answer is simply NO. On the contrary we are fortunate enough to be under their security cover. Such moments rarely come in our mundane lives.

As for the Kanya or Kumari Pooja, we might hear or read about such things in fairy tales or see them at the movies or on the small screen, but here it was right in front of our naked eyes. Were we also provided with the divya drishti (divine vision) to witness such an event on the divya loka (Sri Swamiji's tapobhoomi converted into an abode of the Divine Mother and other cosmic powers)! All eyes were glued to the raised stage where nine beautiful girls and a lady, in their best possible attire, were being worshipped as per

the vedic and tantric traditions by Swamiji himself, with Sri Swamiji explaining the salient features. Swamiji performed the sacred pooja, fed them to their hearts content and finally sought their blessings. We were wonderstruck to see the beautiful bride for Vadhu Poojan along with the nine virgins for Kumari Poojan against the backdrop of the universal symbol AUM. Probably this would have been the first time that Vadhu Poojan and Kanya Poojan had been solemnized simultaneously. Hats off to Sri Swamiji's farsightedness.

Sri Swamiji's handing over tantric cum spiritual charge to Swami Niranjanji was another unique event of the day. He wanted this to be an 'open secret' purposely, for he wished all the old and new disciples, the Mahamandaleshwaras, the Acharyas, the sannnyasins, karma sannnyasins and jignasus, and all the other devotees and aspirants the world over to know that hereafter Swami Niranjanananda would be their 'global guru'. He made this point crystal clear once again in no uncertain terms, and it was a heart touching event for us to watch Sri Swamiji honour Swamiji by handing over to him two sphatik malas and a shivalingam. If we were all moved, what were the sentiments and feelings of the closest disciple and manas putra towards his guru and mentor! As mere spectators we could just read the message they had for one another through their moist eyes and the expressions on their well-composed faces. Such are the sannnyasa and tantric traditions!

At the end of the final day's proceedings we realized that we had neither eaten nor drunk anything throughout the day, but were all cheerful, full of energy and enthusiasm even after eight days of continuous karma yoga, twelve to fourteen hours a day. We knew for certain that an extraordinary energy was flowing in our systems from the highly charged and positive environment created at Alakh Bara, where the cosmic powers were showering miracle after miracle.

Next morning, 1st December, after completing our karma yoga, we assembled in front of Sri Swamiji for his satsang and blessings. All the Certificate Course students were very happy when he quoted from the *Bhagavad Gita*

that whosoever comes to the yogafold never fails. So, now it was Swami Niranjanji's headache to find a strategy to pass everyone somehow, thereby abiding by the wishes of his guru. Sri Swamiji had very conveniently and coolly placed the ball in his court.

As I write these memoirs of the Sat Chandi Maha Yajna, my mind goes back to Sri Swamiji's tapobhoomi again and again. Many images come to mind: the humbleness, sobriety and purity of the Goenkajis (senior and junior), the chief sponsors of the yajna; Swami Yogavijay moving everywhere with his video camera; Swami Tyagraj running around making arrangements; Swami Satyabindu inside the yajna mandap, catering for the needs of the pooja. I can see the serenity on the face of Swami Atmanandaji, Sri Swamiji's first sannyasin disciple, sitting either on his left side or at his feet. Though we heard not a word from her, yet her quiet and ever peaceful face conveyed volumes on devotion, dedication and renunciation. I can also see Swami Satsangi almost everywhere, managing the entire show tirelessly.

I can clearly visualize the towering personality of Swami Niranjanji in or around the yajna mandapam where he performed the sacred pooja; at the feet of Sri Swamiji, his great guru; with Bholenath on vigil and on guard duty; conducting one event after another; talking to countless numbers of people or groups from far and near; singing his hit kirtan 'Narayana, Narayana, Narayana, Om . . .'; or overseeing the entire events for the conduct of the Sat Chandi Maha Yajna.

I can vividly see Sri Swamiji speaking beautifully in his morning satsangs; chanting the mantras; reciting *Rama-charitamanas*; introducing and singing 'Raghu Pati Raghava Raja Ram . . .' with the huge gatherings; singing bhajans and kirtans; dancing merrily during sankirtans; performing Tandava without any inhibition; moving about freely as an accomplished Maharishi; and expressing his frank views explicitly be it on Christianity or virginity. How many such great and highly evolved saints do we have in the present era?

Glossary

Achara – conduct

Acharya – teacher

Aadesh – order; instruction

Adharma – contrary to dharma or the natural order

Adhyatmavidya – experience of the original reality

Advaita – not two; without a second

Advaita Vedanta – the philosophy of Vedanta which supports the view that the Supreme Being (Brahman) is the only eternal, unchanging reality

Agni – god of fire; element of fire

Agni manthan – producing fire by churning or quickly rubbing two pieces of wood together

Aham Brahmasmi – literally ‘I am Brahman’; one of the great sayings of Advaita Vedanta

Ahimsa – non violence on every level to all living beings

Aim Hreem Kleem – three beeja mantras repeated regularly while chanting the invocation to Devi; mantras representing Maha Saraswati, Maha Lakshmi and Maha Kali respectively

Aishwarya – supremacy; sovereignty; power; prosperity

Ajna chakra – the third eye; centre of command or inner intuition located at the midbrain behind the eyebrow centre

Akhara – place where sannyasins perform higher austerities in isolation; place for training in arms

Alakh – which cannot be seen; flame; inner illumination

Allah-o-Akbar – ‘God is great’ (in the Urdu language)

Anadi – eternal; having no beginning
Ananda – bliss
Antah karana – inner instrument or tool constituted by mind, ego, intellect and chitta
Anubhuti – experience; experience of subtle nature
Anugraha – grace; transmission of energy; blessings
Anushthana – a resolve to perform mantra sadhana with absolute discipline for a requisite period of time
Aparoksha – indirect; not perceived directly
Arati – process of worship involving waving of lights with reverence before a deity
Ardhanarishwar – the god represented by a single body in which the right half is male and the left half female; an epithet of Shiva
Artha – accomplishment; attainment in all spheres of life
Ashram – place of spiritual retreat and inner growth through internal and external labour
Ashrama – stage of life (includes brahmacharya, grihastha, vanaprastha, sannyasa)
Ashwamedha Yajna – an auspicious fire ceremony involving the sacrifice of a horse
Atma(n) – individual soul; spirit; self
Atmabhava – having the attitude of perceiving the soul in all; seeing all as like myself
Atma sanyam – self-control, self-moderation
Atmavidya – experience of the soul
Avadhoota – one who is beyond duality; one who has transcended normal consciousness; a tradition of sannyasa
Avahan – the tantric science of invocation
Avidya – ignorance
Avyakta – unmanifest
Bahudaka – supported by many; stage of sannyasa
Baidyanath – one of the names of Lord Shiva; the master of healers
Baidyanath Dham – temple precincts of the jyotirlingam at Deoghar, Bihar
Bali – sacrifice
Bali Vaishvadeva – form of tantric sacrifice
Bel – a sacred tree whose leaves are in triplets and are specially offered to Shiva

Bhairav – an epithet of Lord Shiva; signifying the state which is beyond mundane consciousness

Bhajan – devotional song about various forms of God

Bhakti – pure, intense devotion; channelling of the intellect, emotions and self towards a higher purpose; literally, divine love

Bharat Natyam – a form of Indian classical dance

Bhiksha – alms

Bhoga – prosperity; enjoyment; sensory indulgence

Bhrumadhya – the energy centre triggering ajna chakra, related to the eyebrow centre in the physical body

Bhupali – a classical raga form in Indian music

Bhupura – the outer protective force of a yantra which acts as the entrance

Bhuta – beings; that which exists; subtle form of elements

Bigha – measure of land

Boddhisattva – enlightened being; a name of Lord Buddha

Brahma – first of the Hindu trinity representing creation

Brahma loka – the abode of Lord Brahma

Brahmacharya – being immersed in the contemplation of Brahman; abstinence

Brahman – the one Supreme Reality

Brahmin – member of the priestly caste; one whose consciousness is immersed in Brahman

Burka – traditional garment worn by Muslim women

Chakra – energy centre relating to the evolution of man

Chamcham – sweet made from milk, served in sugar syrup

Chandan – sandalwood

Chapati – flat dry bread

Chaturmas – four months of the monsoon season when special sadhana or anushthana is done by mendicants who remain in one place for the duration

Chaupai – a form of poetic verse with four sections

Chhanda – poetic metre

Conch – large shell which is blown during rituals or war

Crore – ten million

Dakshina – an offering made to the guru or deity

Dal – nutritious soup made of lentils

Daliya – porridge made from wheat

Darshan – inner vision, divine vision; glimpse of a saint or divinity which confers grace; philosophy

Devata – god, divine power, deity; illumined being

Devi – Goddess, Divine Mother

Dharma – duty, natural law; right action

Dharma shastras – books which explain how mankind should conduct life in accordance with dharma

Dhoti – unstitched length of cloth

Dhuni – fire which sadhus sit in front of for sadhana

Dhyana – meditation

Diksha – initiation

Diwali – festival of light celebrating Lord Rama's return from exile after vanquishing Ravana symbolising the victory of good over evil

Dosa – thin savoury crepe, a speciality of South India

Durga – the divinity manifesting as a goddess symbolized as the potent and powerful feminine force

Durga Saptashati – tantric text traditionally chanted twice every year during the period of Navaratri, the nine days dedicated to the worship of the cosmic Mother

Dvaita – philosophical school proposing two original realities: Brahma and Maya

Dwesha – repulsion

Gandhapushpam – fragrance and flowers

Ganesha – elephant-headed, one tusked deity, son of Lord Shiva and Parvati, scribe of the *Mahabharata*; symbol of auspiciousness, wealth, knowledge, attainment and remover of obstacles

Ganga – sacred river Ganges

Geru – earthen red powder; colour of a sannyasin's robes

Grihastha – householder

Gunas – qualities inherent in all nature

Guru – light which dispels the darkness of avidya, or ignorance

Gurubhai – spiritual brother; disciples of the same guru

Gurudwara – the place of worship for Sikhs

Gurukula – school of the vedic tradition where children lived and studied with their guru in his hermitage

Haj – the sacred pilgrimage of Muslims to Mecca

Halwa – a sweet made from flour, butter and sugar

Hamsa – swan; third stage of sannyasa; a sannyasin who can discriminate between reality and unreality

Hanuman Chalisa – hymn in praise of Lord Hanuman the monkey god

Havan – fire ceremony, sacrifice, invocation

Ida nadi – major pranic channel which conducts the mental energy, related to the moon, the feminine nature, the right side of the brain and the left side of the body

Idli – light, white rice cakes

Indriya – sensory organ

Ishta devata – the form of God to which you are attracted; the form of God which is realized within oneself

Ishwara – God, the indestructible or undecaying divine principle

Jabapushpam – hibiscus

Jagat – creation; world

Jagatmata – Divine Mother

Japa – repetition of a mantra or a name of God

Jiva – individual soul, man

Jnana – wisdom

Jnani – wise person

Jyotirlingam – self-existing oval shaped stone symbolizing Lord Shiva; there are twelve such lingams in India

Kali – a goddess symbolizing the destructive female aspect of divinity

Kalpa shastras – aphorisms on various rituals for a householder belonging to the vedic dharma

Kama – emotional fulfillment

Kansa – a demon king who was destroyed by Krishna

Kanya – daughter; a girl between nine years and puberty

Kanya Kumari – Cape Coumarin, a place at the tip of South India; a young virgin female

Karma – action which has a consequence related to its nature; the consequence of some previous action; law of cause and effect

Karmakand – precise rituals connected with vedic sacrifices and other religious activities; that portion of the Upanishads detailing the instructions on behaviour

Kartik – lunar month which occurs in November/December in the Hindu calendar

Kathak – a form of Indian classical dance

Kathakar – a commentator who gives discourses on stories from the epics

Katori – small bowl used as a food container while eating

Kauravas – the sons of Dritarashtra who were also the cousins of the Pandavas in the *Mahabharata* epic

Kheer – sweet preparation made from rice, milk, sugar, dried fruits, nuts and spices

Khichari – dish made from rice, pulse and ghee

Kirtan – chanting of simple mantras with music, rhythm, energy and devotion

Krishna – avatar, manifestation of God in human form, incarnation of Lord Vishnu

Kriya – action; a yogic practice involving higher techniques

Kriyaman karma – present or current actions

Kshatriya – second of the four divisions of the caste system in India; warrior; one who protects others from injury

Kshetra – field; sphere of action

Kshetrapals – guardian spirits which are invoked to protect an area

Kumari – unmarried girl

Kumkum – red powder used to make a dot at the eyebrow centre during worship

Kutichaka – early stage of sannyasa; a sannyasin who lives in an ashram

Kutir – small hut or dwelling place

Laddoo – sweet favoured by Lord Ganesha made in the form of dry balls

Lakh – a hundred thousand

Lakshmi – the wife of Lord Vishnu manifesting as the goddess of wealth and good fortune

Langoti – loin cloth

Laya – dissolution, merging

Loka – more subtle dimension of existence

Lokachara – branch of vedic culture which preaches righteousness in interpersonal relationships

Lokapal – guardian spirit invoked to protect different directions

Madhura – sweetness

Maha – great

Mahabharata – ancient epic about the war between the Pandavas and Kauravas during which Lord Krishna revealed the *Bhagavad Gita* to Arjuna

Mahatma – great soul

Mahavidya – doctrine of meditation

Mala – necklace, garland, rosary

Manas putra – mentally conceived child

Mandala – diagram representing divine knowledge or presence; the abode of a god

Mandalakara – form expressed through mandala

Mandap – place for worship, pavilion

Mandapam – place for the fire ritual or sacrifice; same as mandap

Mangalasutra – traditional mala or necklace of black beads which the husband gives to the wife during the marriage ceremony

Mantra – sound vibration relating to the structure of manifestation composed of specific combinations of syllables

Mantrakara – form expressed through mantra

Marga – path

Maryada – code of conduct

Mata – mother

Math – a centre of the sannyasi tradition

Maya – creative power; power of illusion; counterpart of Brahman

Moksha – liberation

Mooladhara chakra – first energy centre in mankind's scale of evolution situated at the perineum in males and the cervix in females

Mudra – attitude; a physical gesture designed to channel the psychic energies

Mukhi – face

Mukti – salvation; freedom

Mullah – Muslim priest

Muni – one who contemplates or who has conquered the mind

Namah (namo) – salutation signifying bowing before the presence

Namaskara – salutation, traditionally performed by bowing with the hands folded together as in prayer, or by prostrating the body fully on the ground and then coming to the feet with the hands folded as in prayer

Namaz – Muslim style of prayer which combines specific postures with chantings in Arabic

Narayana – name for Lord Vishnu; primordial manifestation of that god whose abode is water; divinity manifesting as every individual

Narmadeshwara lingam – an oval stone which is worshipped as a symbol of Shiva, found only in the bed of the river Narmada

Narmedha Yajna – a ceremony concluding with human sacrifice

Nataraja – king of dance; a name given to Lord Shiva when he dances to bring about the dissolution of the entire creation

Navaratri – nine nights; bi-annual festival focusing on the worship of the goddess Durga and Sri Rama

Nayan – physical eye which allows vision of the external world

Neti (na iti) – not this; a famous exclamation of the Upanishads related to the impossibility of reducing divinity to any explanation or definition

Nirakara – without form

Niranjan – one without second; untainted, stainless

Nirvikalpa – free from distinction, admitting of no alternative; a state of samadhi

Nritya – dance

Nyasa – trust; a ritual involving the invocation of divine energies in various parts of the body; offering oneself

Padma – lotus

Pancha – five

Panchamakara – the five ‘m’s of tantra: mudra, mansa, maithuna, matsya, madhya (psychic attitude, flesh, physical union, fish, wine)

Panchatattwa – the five elements of akasha, vayu, agni, apas, prithvi (ether, air, fire, water and earth)

Panchayat – village council of elders or wise men of the village

Pandal – open sided tent

Pandavas – the five sons of Pandu: Yudhishtira, Arjuna, Bheema, Nakul and Sahadeva in the *Mahabharata* epic

Pandit – learned, wise; one trained in performing priestly functions; established in the perception of reality

Param – first, highest, beyond

Paramahansa – supreme swan; highest stage of spiritual life; a tradition of sannyasa

Paramatma(n) – supreme self; universal or cosmic soul

Parikrama – walking around a sacred site or object or person three times anti-clockwise as a form of worship

Parvati – consort of Lord Shiva in the aspect of daughter of the mountains

Peetha – synonym for math

Pera – sweet made by boiling sweetened milk until it solidifies

Phalahara – food consisting only of fruit and vegetables; no grains

Pie – one twentieth of a rupee; an outdated coin worth virtually nothing

Pingala nadi – major pranic channel which conducts the dynamic energy, prana shakti, relating to the sun, the masculine nature, physical vitality, the left side of the brain and the right side of the body

Pooja – worship, usually accompanied by precise ritual

Poornahuti – final oblation ceremony

Prakriti – the aspect of material manifestation in the Samkhya philosophy

Pralaya – dissolution; dissolution of the entire creation

Pranayama – expansion of the range of vital energy; yogic breathing techniques

Prarabdha karma – destined action; unalterable karma

Prasad – blessed object

Prayaschit – austerity, such as that undertaken by pilgrims travelling on foot to Baidyanath Dham

Puranas – ancient texts containing the earliest mythology of the tantric and vedic traditions

Purascharana – repetition of a mantra as many thousand times as there are syllables in it within a specified period of time

Puri – deep fried batter

Purusha – the conscious aspect in the Samkhya system of philosophy; indwelling spirit; man

Raga – attraction

Raghunath – family name of Lord Rama

Raja – king

Raja yoga – eightfold path classified by Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*; system of yoga which awakens the psychic awareness and faculties through meditation

Rajas – one of the three gunas; state of activity, creativity, dynamism

Rajasuiya Yajna – yajna performed at the coronation of a king
Ramacharitamanas – the story of Lord Rama written by Goswami
Tulsidas as a poetic composition

Ramayana – an inspired book in verses describing the life of
Rama; the historical version is written by Valmiki in Sanskrit,
the devotional version by Tulsidas in a colloquial language,
Avadhi

Rasam – spicy, clear soup commonly eaten in South India

Rasgulla – sweet ball made of milk cake and sugar syrup

Ravana – a demon king of Lanka who abducted Sita and was
destroyed by Lord Rama

Rin – obligations which one is duty bound to repay to benefactors

Rishi – seer; realized sage; one who contemplates or meditates
on the self

Roopa (roopena) – form (in the form of)

Roti – flat unleavened bread

Rupee – unit of currency in India

Sabjee – vegetables

Sabun – soap

Sadhaka – spiritual aspirant; one who practises sadhana

Sadhana – spiritual practice done regularly for attainment of
experience and self-realization

Sadhu – one who performs practices for enlightenment regularly
over a long period of time, with faith and devotion; one who
is compassionate to all; a good person

Sahasrara – thousand petalled lotus; abode of Shiva or
superconsciousness; highest energy centre which symbolizes
the threshold between the psychic and spiritual realms,
located at the crown of the head

Sakara – with form

Samadhi – non-dual state of consciousness attained in the final
stage of raja yoga

Sambar – spicy vegetables

Sampradaya – tradition

Samsara – illusory world; unending cycle of birth and death

Samskara – education; impressions in the mind; past mental
impressions which set up impulses and trains of thought

Sanchit karma – stored, accumulated action; subconscious
impressions of past lives

Sankalpa – resolve

Sannyasin – one who has renounced illusion; renunciate; trustee

Sanskrit – ancient language of the Indian/European continent
composed of bija mantras

Santhali – an ancient tribe found in Bihar

Sanyam – control

Saraswati – wife of Brahma manifesting as the goddess of
knowledge

Sardar – see Sikh

Sati – another name for Lord Shiva's consort

Sattwa – one of the three gunas; quality of harmony, equilibrium,
purity and luminosity

Satya – truth, reality

Satya loka – higher plane of truth and reality

Saundarya Lahari – a devotional hymn to Devi written by Adi
Shankaracharya

Savikalpa – a state of samadhi where some distinction still exists

Seva – service

Sevak – servant; one who lives with a paramahansa in order to
take care of necessary interactions with the realm of duality

Shaiva – worshipper of Lord Shiva

Shakta – one who worships the female aspect of God as the
ultimate form

Shakti – energy, power; female aspect

Shaktipat – direct transmission of energy from guru to disciple

Shaktipeetha – spiritual place dedicated to or indwelt by Shakti

Shaligram – bone of an aquatic creature found in the river
Gandaki in Nepal which is worshipped as a symbol of Lord
Vishnu

Shankara – another name for Lord Shiva

Shanti – peace

Shastrartha – philosophical argument based on the shastras

Shastra – scripture; authentic text

Shastra vikara – six afflictions of the body from birth to death

Shiva(m) – auspiciousness; consciousness; the first yogi; last
of the Hindu trinity representing the destructive or trans-
formative aspect

Shivalingam – an oval stone symbolizing Lord Shiva

Shraddha – faith

Shuddha – pure
Shudra – labourer
Siddha – adept or perfected person; one who is able to control the elements and nature
Sikh – a group originally formed by Guru Nanak in order to protect the dharma
Sindoor – vermilion red colouring used as a marking along the parting of the hair which signifies a married woman
Sita – an incarnation of Shakti as the wife of Lord Rama
Sitar – a stringed instrument especially used in Indian classical music
Sloka – verse
Smriti – memory; sacred books, Vedas, revealed by the sages from the primal source
Sri – epithet of respect; auspicious
Srimad Bhagavata – sacred book recounting the life of Lord Krishna
Stotra – Sanskrit hymn
Sumirini – small hand mala of twenty-seven beads
Sundaram – beauty; beautiful
Sushumna – the major energy flow relating to the spinal cord in the body and to transcendental awareness; activated when ida and pingala are balanced
Swadhyaya – self-study, self-knowledge, self-awareness
Swayamvara – marriage ceremony where the bride chooses her groom from amongst a gathering of desirous men
Tabla – pair of drums used especially for classical Indian music
Tadan – to beat; to pay attention
Tamas – one of the three gunas; quality of inertia, stillness, stability
Tandava Nritya – dance of the destruction of illusion performed by Lord Shiva
Tantra – most ancient universal culture which deals with the transcendence of human nature; process of expansion of mind and liberation of energy
Tapas (tapasya) – austerity (of austerity)
Tattwa – element
Teerthasthana – place of sacred value, holy place of pilgrimage
Traitvad – concept of trinity or three realities

Tridanda – three staffs, a traditional staff of sannyasins made of three woods entwined into a whole

Trigunatmika – being composed of three gunas or qualities

Tripundra – three horizontal stripes of ash on the forehead denoting a member of the Shaivite tradition

Tripurari Sundari – one of the ten Mahavidyas

Tulsi – a sacred herb with medicinal properties

Tushti – satisfaction

Uchcharana – pronunciation

Upachara – process, treatment

Upanayan – inner eye allowing vision of the inner reality

Upanayan samskara – rite during which yajnopavita is performed, traditionally at the age of seven, when the child is taken to meet the guru for higher education

Upanishads – to sit and listen; final statements of the Vedas

Upavita – initiated

Vaishvana – one who worships Lord Vishnu and his incarnations as the ultimate form of God

Vaishya – member of the business caste

Vajroli mudra – yogic practice involving controlled contraction of the urinary/sexual organ in order to rechannel sexual energy for spiritual purposes

Vama – left, as in left hand

Vedas – ancient scriptures including Rig, Sama, Yajur, Atharva revealed to sages and seers expressing the knowledge of the whole universe

Vedachara – branch of vedic culture which preaches living and acting according to vedic precepts

Vedanta – end of perceivable knowledge; final teachings of the Vedas

Vibhooti – special quality of spiritual greatness; sacred ash

Vidhi – the correct process for pooja

Vidvan – learned person

Vidya – higher knowledge, vision

Vigraha – statue; form

Vinayaka – another name for Lord Ganesha

Vishishta Advaita – school of philosophy advocating qualified monism

Vishnu – second of the Hindu trinity representing preservation

Vishwakarma – god of construction
Vritti – circle, pattern of the mind
Yajamana – one who takes the sankalpa of the yajna; host of the sacred ceremony
Yajna – a sacred ceremony; offering oblations to the fire; sacrifice for the upliftment of others, incorporating the three components of worship, satsang and giving
Yajnashala – place where the yajna is conducted
Yajnopavita – sacred thread worn around the trunk by all brahmins
Yantra – geometric symbol designed for concentration to unleash the hidden potential within the consciousness; visual form of mantra which holds the essence of manifestation; a symbol of divinity
Yantrakara – form expressed through yantra
Yatra – journey
Yogi/yogini – adept in yoga
Yoni – source; place from where creation takes place; vagina
Yuga – epoch, the four being: Satya yuga, Treta yuga, Dwapar yuga and Kali yuga

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Swami Satyananda was born in Almora (Uttaranchal) in 1923. Drawn to spiritual life from an early age, he left home at the age of eighteen, and in 1943 surrendered himself to Swami Sivananda in Rishikesh who initiated him into Dashnami sannyasa in 1947. He served his guru for twelve years, perfecting every aspect of spiritual life. Thereafter, he travelled throughout the Indian subcontinent as a wandering ascetic.



Realizing the need of the times as scientific rendition of the ancient system of yoga, he founded the International Yoga Fellowship in 1956 and the Bihar School of Yoga in 1963. During the next twenty years, Swami Satyananda hoisted the flag of yoga in every corner of the world, consolidated BSY into a foremost institution of yoga, and authored over eighty major texts on yoga, tantra and spiritual life.

‘Satyananda Yoga’ became a tradition which combines classical knowledge with experiential understanding and a modern outlook. In 1984 he founded the Yoga Research Foundation to synchronize scientific research and yoga, and Sivananda Math to assist the underprivileged. In 1988, at the peak of his achievements, he renounced everything and adopted kshetra sannyasa, living as a paramahansa ascetic. In 1989 Rikhia was revealed to him, where he came to live and performed higher vedic sadhanas in seclusion. Receiving the command to provide for his neighbours in 1991, he allowed the ashram to help the underprivileged villages in the region. From 1995 onwards, he performed a twelve-year Rajasooya Yajna with the sankalpa of peace, plenty and prosperity for all, and in 2007 he announced the establishment of Rikhiapeeth with its mandate to ‘serve, love, give’.

Swami Satyananda attained mahasamadhi, a yogic accomplishment of discarding the body at will to become one with the universal consciousness, in 2009, in the presence of his disciples.



SATYANANDA YOGA
BIHAR YOGA

“Sat Chandi Mahayajna is conducted to invoke the blessings of Devi, the Cosmic Mother, and to ask her to protect and nurture us. We have to connect ourselves with this cosmic energy which is present in all forms of creation.”

Bhakti Yoga Sagar Volume 3 consists of satsangs given by Swami Satyananda Saraswati at the first Sat Chandi Mahayajna conducted at Rikhiapeeth in November 1995. During the nine days of this unique event, Sri Swamiji enlightened one and all on the significance of worshipping the Divine Mother, the purpose of yajna, kanya kumari pooja, the role of women in modern society, practical measures to uplift the underprivileged villagers, shaktipat and the tantric initiation of Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati. This book is a powerful message to open the heart and see the underlying unity in all creation.

Includes 16 colour photographs.



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